


Braille Monitor



JANUARY, 1975

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND



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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

A Publication of the
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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN INKPRINT, BRAILLE, AND ON TALKING BOOK DISCS
DISTRIBUTED FREE TO THE BLIND BY THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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* * *

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If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Berkeley Office for other suggested forms.

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READING AIDS FOR THE BLIND: INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS AND TEACHERS

BY

HARVEY LAUER

Editor's Note.—Harvey Lauer is Electronic Reading Specialist, Central Section for Visually Impaired and Blinded Veterans, Veterans Hospital, Hines, Illinois.

Scope of the Article

This article concerns inkprint reading aids for people who cannot use optical aids or closed-circuit TV systems. Available reading devices and some current research are described and discussed. The paper concerns work with adults, though there are many implications for children.

History

Before escorting you into the microcosmic world of reading aids, let me supply some background. In 1913, a British physicist, Dr. E. E. Fournier d'Albe described a reading aid for blind people and later built a crude model. A young woman, Mary Jameson, demonstrated it. Then a British engineering firm, Barr and Stroud, redesigned it and built six units. Several blind persons have used them down to the present. Miss Jameson, the first user and teacher of the skill, is today active in the field.

The British device is the first member of the optophone family. Optophone is the name for a class of machines which convert letter shapes into tone patterns. As the probe or camera is moved horizontally, each tone responds to an assigned portion of the letter along its vertical axis. For example, a letter V is heard as a descending

scale of sound followed by an ascending scale. The letter I is heard largely as a chord because several of the photocells "see" the print simultaneously.

Through the years, several designs of optophones have been built. The British machines first had five channels or tones; then they were given a sixth. Twenty years ago I read that Mary Jameson was reading her mail and checking her typing, and I decided to seek an opportunity to use a reading aid. So ten years ago I learned to read with a device the size of a train case which had nine tones. It was called the VA-Battelle optophone. For many years after World War II, the VA was responsible for the most reading-aids research done in this country, and this machine designed at Battelle Memorial Institute, Dayton, Ohio, was a VA project. In 1966, I taught Margaret Butow to read with it. She is now teaching the use of the Stereotoner at the Hadley School for the Blind, Winnetka, Illinois.

In 1967 the Visotoner came onto the scene. The Visotoner is an optophone made by Mauch Laboratories of Dayton, Ohio, under VA sponsorship. In that year, I began working full time as a reading aids specialist in the VA. In 1973 Mauch Laboratories began manufacturing the Stereotoner. It is the latest form of optophone, and I shall describe it later.

Other Audible Devices

Over the years, a number of designs have been proposed. The RCA A2 reading

machine was a VA project of the 1940's. It used a raster which scanned vertically. The Canadian lexiphone and the Russian optophone are among research efforts of the 1960's. There are also basement laboratory designers who propose reading aids consisting of single-channel optical probes. These make good light detectors but have severe limitations as reading aids.

Tactile Outputs

Probably the first reading aid to have a tactile output was the Visotactor. It was built by Mauch Laboratories in the early 1960's. Its eight vibrating pins are felt by four fingers of the right hand. Several people learned to use it, but it is now considered obsolete and is not presently used. Extensive research is going on at Smith-Kettlewell Institute, San Francisco, California, on tactile outputs for sensory aids. Other efforts throughout the world range from the modest to the ambitious. Parts of the body including the back, the stomach, and forehead are under consideration. Most recently, electrical stimulation of the brain is being studied.

The Optacon

The Optacon is the result of extensive research begun in the early 1960's at Stanford Research Institute and Stanford University. It has been on the market for three years and is manufactured by Telesensory Systems, Inc., Palo Alto, California. The firm's president, Dr. James C. Bliss, had a large part in the Optacon's development.

The word Optacon means optical to tactile converter. It measures in inches, 2 by 7 by 9. The instrument has a probe or camera, electronic circuits, and a matrix of

vibrators. The matrix or array of vibrators consists of six columns and twenty-four rows and is felt by one finger. The array vibrates in the shapes of print symbols as the user tracks the print with the camera held in his other hand.

Eight hundred Optacons have been sold throughout the world. The price is \$3,450, and a service contract is available costing \$200 per year after the first year. A number of data processors are among its most enthusiastic users.

A newly-designed tracking aid is available. Another accessory is a visual display monitor by which a sighted teacher can monitor the student's reading. A blind teacher can do this by connecting another Optacon to the student's machine. Usually, the teacher's own machine is used for monitoring.

The Stereotoner

Designed under contract with the VA Research Center for Prosthetics, the Stereotoner is manufactured by Mauch Laboratories, Inc., Dayton, Ohio. It measures in inches, 4 by 5 by 1½, and is usually worn on the chest while reading. As its probe is moved along a line of print, a ten-tone (ten-channel) code is heard stereophonically in earphones. Each tone is heard at a different volume in each ear. High tones are heard louder in the right ear and softer in the left. With low tones, the situation is reversed. The letter V, which was described earlier, also sounds as if it moves from side to side. The price of the Stereotoner is \$1,120. About seventy-five machines have been sold.

A ruler-shaped tracking aid is provided. This facilitates tracking for users, but

beginners need a larger version. Monitoring is done by connecting a second set of earphones. An accessory which permits visual monitoring is also available. About twenty-five people are using Stereotoners, most of them having been trained within the past year, so data on long-term usefulness is not yet available. Several typists are among the enthusiastic users of the Stereotoner.

Demonstrations

After years of lecturing and demonstrating, I have concluded that the biggest mistake an interested person can make is to form a firm opinion either for or against a given reading aid after a lecture and brief demonstration. Few people are equipped to judge their ability or lack of ability to learn to use rapidly-presented tonal or vibratory patterns. Even fewer people understand the several tasks involved in using an aid—the interaction between man and machine.

Typically, the demonstrator slowly presents to the observer some simple letter shapes. This is done to show the principles of operation and the intelligibility of the signals. The experience leads some to conclude that the skill is easily mastered while others are frightened by its apparent difficulty.

The observer's reaction seems to depend as much on his self-image and his definitions of reality as it depends on his abilities and the quality of the demonstration. On some occasions, however, a skilled user demonstrates by reading normally while the observer listens to the sounds of the Stereotoner or feels the output of a "harnessed" Optacon. The observer then reacts in whatever ways he

customarily reacts to the performance of a well-trained athlete, magician, or psychic. Such diverse reactions also occur as people watch Braille being read for their first time.

Demonstrations are suitable for the casually interested. For the deeply interested, we should provide demonstration, experience, tests, and counsel.

Training

Learning to use a reading aid is much like learning a second language. Self-training is not recommended. From two to four weeks of fairly intensive training is given which should be followed by several months to a year of regular practice. Ideally, before a wise decision is made, several hours of experience and tests with each machine are needed.

Utility

Reading aids are used chiefly for tasks requiring small but important amounts of reading. These include checking one's typing (often while still in the typewriter), reading correspondence, bills, memos, definitions, recipes, currency, and so on. Reading handwriting is seldom attempted and rarely done. Few people read books and newspapers because Braille, recordings, and radio are much faster. Speech compressors should soon cost under \$200. They will make reading by listening even more efficient. Some business machines can be equipped with Braille or audible outputs which do not require use of a reading aid. These alternatives should be studied and reported to consumers.

On the other hand, many developments in technology and standardization favor the

use of reading aids. For example, a typewriter equipped with an erase feature used by a typist equipped with a reading aid add up to an efficient and rewarding combination.

Reading aids are a useful addition to the life styles of certain people. It takes many people a year or so to reorient their habits and skills before they know exactly how the aid will fit into their lives. The decision whether to acquire an aid and be trained is made more difficult by the changing environment of modern life, the newness of the aids, lack of good studies of their utility and the glamorization of sensory aids for the blind.

Studies of Utility and Reading Rates

At present, reading rates and the usefulness of reading aids are difficult to assess accurately. Most testing has been done while students are in intensive training where rates and utility are naturally low. After training, data is usually obtained through questionnaires and telephone interviews. Generally, such data is unreliable because users' estimates of their reading rates are often inaccurate, and their estimates of how efficiently they use their aids are very subjective. What is additionally needed is an independent study of people who have used reading aids for at least one year and those who have discontinued their use. A battery of tests should be given to determine reading rates and skills at whichever tasks are appropriate to individual users. Anything short of such a study runs the risk of being a disservice to consumers and organizations who invest time, money, and effort. When the successful users are identified, we can give informed counsel to candidates.

In the absence of suitable follow-up data, there is little to be said about reading rates. Attainable rates vary widely. A minority of users read around ten words per minute. Speeds in excess of sixty words per minute are fairly rare. A low-speed user with lots of time to spend may be happier than a high-speed user who is in a hurry. It will be possible to predict more accurately the attainable reading rates of candidates when further research results are available. We look forward to the research findings of two projects conducted by the American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California. These are the Optacon Project sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and the Stereotoner Project sponsored by the VA.

Comparability

To make a facetious beginning, both Optacon and Stereotoner can "see" the print. There are differences in the range of sizes and colors which each machine will accommodate. There would be little value in listing these specifications without adding pages of information about the world of print.

Reading by means of the sense of hearing requires less hardware, so the Stereotoner has less circuitry and fewer moving parts. This gives it advantages in size, cost, and maintenance. One hand is also free for handling materials or tracking. These advantages, however, only help those people who can learn well its ten-channel audible code.

Since the Optacon has twenty-four rows of vibrators, it delivers more information or detail about letter features than does the Stereotoner. This additional information, however, is useful only to those who can perceive this detail with a finger.

A choice of machine should be based on testing and trials. Experience has sadly shown that it's a mistake to base one's decision on such things as proficiency with Braille, musical background, or attitudes about the signals.

Each of my students is given tests and experience with both machines. Of my last eight students, four were taught the Optacon and four the Stereotoner. This means only that I did the best I could with the available materials. It does not mean that fifty percent of the people need each machine. That percentage will best be found after more research findings are available.

Blind Teachers

I teach the use of both machines. I have been trained with both, and I can read with both, but I personally use the Stereotoner. This is because the tonal code was first available to me and because I have a higher potential for it. It is very advisable for a blind teacher to use one machine proficiently. The second machine should be learned to the point where the teacher can completely monitor his student's reading.

Human Factors in Learning the Skill

Learning to use a reading aid is like learning a new language. By this is meant that patterns must be apprehended subconsciously as letters and words. For example, the Stereotoner code is in my subconscious. To install the Optacon code in my subconscious would require much motivation and practice.

There develops a complex, "intimate" man-machine relationship. The degree of involvement or "love affair" one has with a

reading aid is greater than the investment needed in becoming a skilled typist but less than the investment needed in becoming an accomplished musician. Occasionally, we encounter the exceptional person who learns the skill quite easily. Such people have either exceptional ability or exceptional motivation.

The following is an example of one among several interesting hypotheses. This man-machine relationship seems to favor the type of person whom the psychologist Dr. Stanley Martindale calls *verbal* over the *anomic* person. He says the *verbal* person (30% of the population) is one who relates best "self to object," and the *anomic* person (70%) relates best "self to person."

One caution we give to potential students is to keep an open mind about their abilities and lack of abilities. We also recommend that newly blind people first avail themselves of other needed rehabilitative services before they consider a reading aid. Those who have remaining vision should also first try low-vision lenses and closed-circuit TV systems. Generally, students who are learning to use a reading aid find the training to be challenging and rewarding.

My Suggestions

Based on my experience, I also submit the following suggestions. (1) Students should be encouraged to learn the skill only when long-term loan or purchase is highly probable. (2) Agencies which lend reading aids should do thorough follow-up to see that the aids are in use and not in closets. (3) There should be a rental option for those who buy aids. This need not apply to agencies for the blind. Agencies can transfer the aids to other users if necessary.

Tracking Aids

I must discuss tracking aids or my colleagues will count me remiss. Some users and most beginners do not have the coordination needed to track print well by hand. Tracking aids have often been inadequate because of initial over-optimism as to the difficulty of the task and because designers who work hard to miniaturize both hardware and costs are reluctant to admit that their "brain children" need mechanical help. Suitable tracking aids for current reading devices became available some time after production models first appeared. Teachers who do not have experience with a good tracking aid do not know what they and their students are missing.

Beginners may also be helped by motor-driven pacing aids. The modern versions are expensive and complex, but the British had a simply-operated one for their first optophones. Good instructional manuals have been slow in coming, but the new ones are greatly improved thanks to the American Institutes for Research and the equipment developers.

Population and Future Needs

Let us turn now to demographics. The American Foundation for the Blind, New York, New York, found that there are half a million legally blind people in the United States. Twenty-five percent or 120,000 of them cannot read print with their eyes. All of our candidates are among this group. About two-thirds of these people are over age sixty, so most of our candidates are among the remaining one-third or 40,000 people. The latter group also includes the children.

We need intelligent, literate, well-motivated people with either good tactual perception or good auditory discrimination ability who have a need to read print materials independently.

The American Foundation for the Blind, in its telephone survey of Optacon users, published in *The New Outlook for the Blind*, February 1974, says: "AFB estimates that perhaps ten thousand people in the United States and Canada . . . might be potential users of the Optacon." Further study may show this estimate to be a little high. I would say that several thousand people in the United States can use one reading aid or the other.

Now let us look at the picture for veterans. John Malamazian, chief, Blind Rehabilitation at Hines Hospital, gives the following figures which he and others in the VA have compiled. Eighteen thousand legally blinded veterans have been identified. There may be two or three thousand more who have not yet been identified. About four thousand are totally blind. Most are World War II veterans. Many of them lost their sight after leaving the military service. There are less than one thousand totally blind people, mainly men, who are below age fifty-five. I estimate that about 150 veterans will be interested in reading aids and eligible for them.

Let us turn to the world picture. According to the British Royal National Institute for the Blind, which has facilities in all parts of the world, there are fifteen million blind people in the world. Because of high incidence of blindness among young people in less developed countries, five million of this total is of working age. Though the literacy rate in much of the world is low, a world market would

certainly make production of reading aids more efficient.

Some Prospects for the Future

So far, we have discussed what are called "direct-translation" reading aids. Current machines, the Optacon and Stereotoner, do not (intentionally) process data. Instead, they provide the user with signals depicting the shapes of symbols "seen" by their electro-optical systems. Suppose now that we add to such a direct-translation reading aid logic circuitry so that it will give us the identities of letters. We would then have an Optical Character Reader, commonly dubbed an OCR. Industry has OCR machines feeding alpha-numeric data to its computers. They are accurate, and they feed data faster than we humans could handle it. However, they are bulky, enormously expensive, and too limited in the number of type styles they will accommodate to cope with the world of print faced by the office worker and homemaker.

Among several projects to build a personal OCR for blind people are those of MIT, Israel, Canada, and the VA. The VA project conducted at Mauch Laboratories will be described here.

Mauch Labs calls their design the Cognodictor. It incorporates a reading aid like the Optacon or Stereotoner with which the user must track the print, adjust for print size, and read whichever symbols the machine's logic circuitry is not programmed to identify. These include numerals, punctuation, unusual print styles, and "damaged" print. However, when so-called "good" print is encountered, the machine "talks" to him in letter sounds or spelled speech. In short,

the user must learn to use a direct-translation machine with which he would read such things as bank statements. However, when the body of a magazine article is to be read, the minicomputer will function permitting reading rates of one hundred plus words per minute. The cost will be several thousand dollars.

The concept of the Cognodictor was partially and successfully tested with past designs. In 1971, several blind people, myself included, used a model of the Cognodictor with spelled-speech output. In my opinion, at the present rate of development, there will be a new prototype in two years and a production model in four years. Some of my colleagues feel that less time will be required.

Let us now look beyond the personal reading aid. A library book could be transcribed into recorded form by a computer. This job may take a team of computers. The spoken-English output of such a system is being researched in a VA project at Haskins Laboratories, New Haven, Connecticut. This output would also be useful in a time-shared arrangement with a large computer. Under such an arrangement, the user would telephone the computer for service. He might then have to track the print with his small machine with which he could also read independently. The computer would then read "over his shoulder," so to speak, and speak to him over the phone in his native tongue. MIT and Stanford Research Institute have also done work in this area. Presumably, if and when computer terminals become common in our homes, then computers may also help us read. Our glimpse into the future has shown that future developments, rather than making present skills obsolete, could make those skills more valuable.

Conclusion

The Optacon is being well received by many. Its manufacturer has a training facility, as do a number of agencies. The Stereotoner is being introduced into several training facilities including the Hadley School for the Blind. Hadley also has a pre-training tape recorded course which will be revised for the Stereotoner. This recorded course will introduce the skill and prepare people for training at Hadley or

elsewhere. As we learn about the Stereotoner's applications and the kinds of people who can use it, it should take its place among rehabilitation tools.

I do not state the case for reading aids as strongly as those who say that they open up a new world for blind people. I do state the case as follows: The reading aids offer certain people a bit of synthetic eyesight. □

NAC UPDATE: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

BY

KENNETH JERNIGAN

I am writing this article to bring you up to date on the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped (NAC). Even though the National Federation of the Blind is, by far, the largest organization of blind persons in this country, NAC refused to send a representative to speak at our Convention in Chicago last summer. However, Dr. Andrew Adams (newly appointed Federal Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services) behaved differently. Not only did he come and speak to us but he also listened—and responded.

Dr. Adams said that he would call a meeting of representatives of NAC and the organized blind and that HEW officials (he among them) would be present to chair and observe. He further said that NAC would receive no more Federal money from his agency unless he could be convinced that NAC had made reforms. Dr. Adams was as good as his word.

The meeting (see *The Braille Monitor* for November 1974) was held in Washington, August 12, 1974. At that time it was agreed that a special ad hoc committee of NAC Board members would meet with representatives of the Federation to try to work out an understanding. It was further agreed that NAC, the NFB, and Dr. Adams would hold another meeting in Chicago, November 15, 1974.

The ad hoc committee came to Des Moines for a meeting with Federation representatives September 21, 1974. The meeting was held in the offices of the Federation. The NAC committee consisted of Hal Bleakley, president of the Center for the Blind of Philadelphia; Louis Rives, former head of the Office for the Blind in Federal rehabilitation; Howard Hanson, assistant program administrator, Division of Services to the Visually and Physically Handicapped for South Dakota; and Jack Birch, professor, School of Education, Pittsburgh—all blind except Mr. Birch. I represented the Federation, as did John

Taylor and Dick Edlund. The discussions were cordial, productive, and fruitful.

We began by reading the article on the *Kettner* case. Although Mr. Birch is chairman of the Commission on Accreditation, he was unfamiliar with the *Kettner* case—this despite the fact that it had been officially called to the attention of NAC shortly after our Convention. Thus, our contention that the staff runs NAC and keeps the board members in the dark was underscored.

We also discussed the Kansas workshop situation and the strike by the workers last spring. As we showed the NAC Board members the documentation, they seemed surprised at the way the matter had been handled by the NAC staff. It was clear that the NAC staff had made no investigation at all but had simply whitewashed the situation even though the evidence strongly indicated a probable violation of Federal law, plus questionable ethics and poor administration.

We discussed the *Kettner* and Kansas workshop cases to emphasize the point that NAC accreditation in no way indicates quality service. In fact, it often indicates the exact opposite. It is increasingly clear that NAC is a vehicle for shielding the substandard agencies from criticism and attack. The NAC committee assured us that *Kettner* and Kansas would receive further investigation and that the results would not be concealed. I write in December. No word from NAC has been received.

The NAC members indicated that they were less than pleased with Mr. Handel, the head of the NAC staff, but that they hoped Dr. Bleecker, his successor, would be better. They also indicated that there were

sharp divisions and cleavages in the NAC Board. It was obvious that our efforts to send a message to NAC have had more results than even many of our own members have thought. The NAC members made such comments as: "We recognize that NAC is dying." "We know that we will not get more Federal money unless NAC is reformed." "Many of us on the NAC Board have fought as hard as we could to bring changes, but we have met resistance from those in control." These are not exact quotes, but I think they accurately paraphrase what was said.

In this context one more thing may be worth noting. NAC has always tried to present itself as a very "professional," very "ethical" organization, not fighting anybody but just doing its job—far above any thought of battle or devious maneuver. I pointed out to Lou Rives that the statement he had read in support of NAC before a congressional committee last July was regrettably lacking in candor. As an example, the statement neglected to say that one of those agencies (namely, the Mississippi Services for the Blind) had officially asked that its name be removed from the accredited list. The NAC members responded to the effect that this was simply one of the necessary tactics of war. One cannot quarrel with this concept, but it reveals NAC's virtuous protestations for the tinsel and trimming which they are.

Late in the day we arrived at an agreement. The NAC members went to their hotel to put it into final form. Afterward I reviewed it with them, and we all said we would try to work to have it adopted—both by NAC and by the blind. The NAC members said that NAC would either accept the agreement or they would soon withdraw from participation on the

NAC Board. The text of the agreement is as follows:

**Summary of Points of Agreement Between
NFB and NAC Ad Hoc Committee
On Recommendations To Be Made
To NAC's President and Governing Body
*Meeting of September 21, 1974***

The following items are recommended. Also, when approved, it is recommended that bylaws be revised and enacted to include these specific items:

1. Consumer participation opportunities in NAC's governance should be assured by establishing that NAC's Board be made up of not to exceed thirty-nine persons, at least thirteen from the national organizations of the blind. Of the remainder, one-half should be persons from accredited agencies and one-half persons elected at large.
2. The members of the board from the organizations of the blind should be elected from lists submitted by the organizations in response to requests from the president of NAC to the presidents of the respective organizations to submit such lists to the chairman of the nominating committee if they wish to do so. The number to be elected from each organization is as follows: NFB-10; ACB-2; BVA-1. The remainder of the board members should be elected from a slate prepared by the nominations committee or nominated from the floor. In all cases, nominations should be accompanied by evidence that the person nominated would be willing to serve if elected.
3. Each of the following bodies should have in its membership at least two

persons from the national organizations of the blind, at least one of whom should be from the NFB:

Commission on Accreditation;
Commission on Standards;
Board Executive Committee;
Nominating and other standing committees.

Also, each on-site visit team and each ad hoc body created by the board or by the corporation should have at least one member from the national organizations of the blind. Those organizations will provide lists of persons and their qualifications for on-site team membership.

4. The committee on bylaw revision should begin immediately to develop bylaws to effect these items.
5. The NAC Board should act to reconstitute itself and the bodies named in recommendation (3) at the earliest possible time, with the changes to be made as soon as feasible and completed not later than the next scheduled annual meeting.

In addition to the above recommendations regarding NAC's organizational structure, the following items of action should be given highest priority:

(A) Develop and implement a standard procedure for dealing with complaints which emphasizes in-depth investigation and direct action which can be initiated by information from any source.

(B) Review all standards for consumer relevance and make changes and additions

with consumer interests and advocacy of consumer benefits in mind.

(C) Take steps to defuse the present conflict between NFB and NAC by continued communication and sincere efforts on the part of both parties.

(D) Begin measures to undo the harm done to NFB and NAC by the attacks each has made on the other, and continue those measures until it is clear to both parties that all possible has been done in that direction.

(E) Initiate actions between the organized blind and NAC to enhance the credibility and stature of each, and plan and conduct those actions in close cooperation.

Hal Bleakley, who seems to be a person of integrity and understanding, said that he would discuss the terms of the agreement with the NAC Bylaws Committee and the NAC Executive Committee and then let me know the results.

The NAC Executive Committee met October 24. Mr. Robinson was ill, so the executive committee met without him. Apparently the debate was heated. NAC's bylaws currently provide for a maximum of thirty-five board members. There are actually twenty-eight now serving. Both the bylaws committee and the executive committee showed no wish to increase the authorization to thirty-nine or to seek resignations from any of the current twenty-eight, thus making it impossible to implement the terms of the agreement. Rather, NAC's Executive Committee resorted to their time-honored dodges and

double-talk. They proposed that seven people be added to the NAC Board (bringing its membership up to thirty-five) and that recommendations be sought from consumer organizations in filling the vacancies.

When Hal Bleakley and I talked later, I emphasized again that the NFB would not be flimflammed by fine words or double-talk and that we would either have the entire package which had been agreed upon, or nothing. Mr. Bleakley said that he understood the Federation's position and that he agreed with it. He further said that he would do all that he could at the upcoming NAC membership and board meeting on November 6 and 7 to have the agreement accepted.

Under date of October 30, 1974, I wrote to Mr. Bleakley as follows:

DEAR HAL: The Executive Committee of the National Federation of the Blind met by conference telephone October 28, 1974, and considered the relations of the organized blind with NAC. Our decision (as I earlier told you I thought it would be) was that if NAC fails to implement all of the agreement worked out by our representatives and the Ad Hoc NAC Committee, then we want nothing to do with any of it. It is a package and cannot be fragmented. I know that we are agreed on this point.

It is my understanding that you, as chairman of NAC's officially appointed ad hoc committee, will present to the NAC Board at its November meeting the list of names from which our ten representatives will be elected. It is my further understanding that you will attempt to see that the elections occur then and there and

that our representatives are seated immediately.

I have consulted with each member on the following list, and each has consented to serve if elected (assuming that all of the conditions of the agreement are honored by NAC). Here is the list:

- (1) Kenneth Jernigan, President,
National Federation of the Blind,
524 Fourth Street,
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
- (2) Donald Capps,
Insurance Company Executive,
1829 Belmont Drive,
Columbia, South Carolina 29206.
- (3) Ralph Sanders, Co-owner,
Executive Vice President,
Concept-three, Inc.,
an advertising firm,
300 Spring Building, Suite 612,
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201.
- (4) Perry Sundquist,
Chief of the Division for the Blind,
California Department of Social
Welfare, retired,
4651 Mead Avenue,
Sacramento, California 95822.
- (5) James Gashel,
Chief, Washington Office,
National Federation of the Blind,
Dupont Circle Building,
1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036.
- (6) Ethel Parker, Board Member,
Mississippi Department of Public
Welfare,
P.O. Box 2673,
Laurel, Mississippi 39440.
- (7) John Taylor,
Assistant Director in Charge of Field
Operations,
Iowa Commission for the Blind,
Fourth and Keosauqua Way,
Des Moines, Iowa 50309.
- (8) Joyce Scanlan, President,
National Federation of the Blind
of Minnesota,
1605 Eustis,
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108.
- (9) Elizabeth Bowen, President,
National Federation of the Blind
of Florida,
2415 Brownwood Road,
Jacksonville, Florida 32207.
- (10) Rami Rabby,
Consultant, Hewitt Associates,
535 North Michigan Avenue, Apt. 304,
Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Cordially,

KENNETH JERNIGAN,
President, National Federation of the Blind.

Meanwhile, Mr. Robinson had followed his usual pattern and done the expected. NAC is always predictable—long and involved statements, high sounding words, misemphasis, twisting of the facts, and downright misrepresentation. Under date of October 29, 1974, Mr. Robinson wrote to me saying:

DEAR DR. JERNIGAN: We are glad that you or your representative will be present at NAC's membership meeting on November 7 and will make a statement concerning consumer involvement in NAC. Of course, as you know, you are most

welcome to attend the dinner and evening session on November 6 and the board meeting on November 7 as well.

Meanwhile, as you probably know by know from Hal Bleakley, this letter is to keep you up to date and to ask for your help in developing the plan our executive committee has requested me to prepare.

At the executive committee last week, the ad hoc committee on liaison with national consumer organizations and the ad hoc committee on bylaws reported. The report of the committee on liaison of course contained much material stemming from the committee's meeting with NFB representatives.

The executive committee noted that the two reports had in common the principle that NAC should move vigorously toward increased and more meaningful involvement of users of services—and especially involvement of persons suggested by national organizations of the blind—at all levels of NAC's operations.

The committee requested me to prepare an outline for the consideration of the membership meeting November 7 of steps NAC should take in order to put this principle into practice.

Here are my first thoughts:

1. Board of Directors

At its next meeting on November 7, the NAC Board of Directors could, in accordance with the bylaws, declare that there are seven vacancies on the board, and set the term of office (one, two, or three years) for each vacancy. The president thereupon could instruct the nominations

committee to elicit suggestions, from national organizations of the blind, of persons who might be nominated for the vacancies.

The nominations committee would be further instructed to make its report and recommend nominations at the next meeting of the board.

The board could also plan to hold its next meeting in about four months rather than in six months. This would allow time for the actions described above, plus those outlined below. It would also enable the board to move ahead promptly, once the preliminary actions had been taken, to consideration of the nominations committee report.

The nominations committee would also be instructed to request suggestions for nominees from national organizations of the blind on each subsequent occasion when there are board vacancies to be filled.

2. Commission on Standards

The board of directors might instruct the commission on standards to review thoroughly its policies, procedures, and plans, and especially the standards themselves, in the light of the principle of increased involvement of users of services and prepare recommendations for the next board meeting.

As president, I would also invite nominations from the national organizations of the blind for positions on the commission as vacancies occur. It would be the policy of the president, in accordance with the principle expressed above, to fill some of these positions with persons who were members of national organizations of the blind.

3. Commission on Accreditation

The board of directors might instruct the commission on accreditation to review thoroughly its policies, procedures (including procedures for conducting self-studies, selecting on-site review team members, and conducting on-site reviews), and plans in the light of the principle of increased involvement of users of services and prepare recommendations for the next board meeting.

As president, I would invite nominations as described for the commission on standards.

The time is short, but I should greatly appreciate it if you could let me have your comments and suggestions on this tentative plan in time for me to include them in the report I must make on Thursday, November 7. This means I'd need to receive them by the morning of November 6 at the latest.

Additional thoughts that you do not have time to put in the mail for me might be included in the presentation that you or your representative will make on the 7th.

Thank you for your interest and helpfulness.

Sincerely,

DANIEL D. ROBINSON.

As a result of our efforts the NAC leadership apparently decided that they must make at least a gesture toward conciliation. Accordingly, a special membership meeting of NAC (the first in

its history) was called in conjunction with the November 6-7 board meeting.

NFB Second Vice President Ralph Sanders organized and coordinated our picketers and demonstrators to welcome and remind the NAC Board members. Don Morris capably co-chaired this effort. We had well over a hundred demonstrators on the streets with signs and leaflets. The NAC members would have liked for all of the blind demonstrators to come into the meeting room as "observers"—immobilized and out of sight of the public, but (as with most NAC efforts) the trick didn't work. I am told that we had the most enthusiastic and spirited demonstration we have yet mounted at one of these NAC Board get-togethers.

Meanwhile, John Taylor was our official representative in the meeting room. The first activity on the evening of November 6 was a cocktail party followed by an eleven-dollar-per-plate dinner, at which Mr. Handel (retiring executive director) was honored. Then came the membership meeting, presided over by Claire Carlson (NAC treasurer) since Mr. Robinson was still ill. Mr. Bleakley presented the report of the ad hoc committee, and McAllister Upshaw (the rather well-publicized head of the Greater Detroit Society for the Blind) presented a report from the bylaws committee. Mr. Bleakley's report contained some interesting comments. He said that the ad hoc committee believed that if NAC did not accept the agreement which had been reached with the NFB, the Federation has the will and the power to destroy NAC. He went on to say, however, that the ad hoc committee had not entered into the agreement out of any sense of intimidation but because they believed it was right and reasonable. He said that the NAC

committee believed that each and every part of the proposed agreement was fair and just. Otherwise, the committee would, he said, have rejected it. After these reports, the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting resumed at nine o'clock the following morning, November 7 and a great and lengthy hassle ensued. Before going further, it may be well to tick off certain facts: (1) NAC reported having accredited no new agencies since June. (2) After seven years of operation only fifty-six (now fifty-five with the defection of Mississippi) of the several hundred agencies in the field sought and accepted NAC accreditation. (3) It was reported that the American Foundation for the Blind, moving to support the sagging fortunes of its client offspring, has increased its contribution to NAC in the amount of approximately \$25,000, thus bringing the total to something in the neighborhood of \$125,000 for the year. (4) Even with this parental support, NAC expects to be approximately \$50,000 short in its budget this year. (5) Unless HEW makes a grant in January, the shortage could be much greater. (6) To cut expenses NAC is considering more modest office space and curtailment of staff and board travel. Not a happy picture.

The day was filled with wrangling, but it can all be summed up quite simply. NAC rejected the report of its own ad hoc committee but tried the usual flimflam to pretend that it was making concessions and offering conciliation. It was voted that one-third of the members of the NAC Board should be drawn from members of national organizations of the blind or persons recommended by such organizations. This was to be achieved over a three-year period. The ratio of NFB to

ACB membership was rejected. Thus, the make-up of the NAC Board (at least, from the point of view of consumer representation) will continue to be at least as bad as it has been in the past—probably worse since it will be alleged to the public and the Congress that true consumer representation has been achieved. The entire one-third could (and, in the circumstances, probably will) be drawn from the ACB, leaving the largest organization of the blind in the country without representation.

The NAC staff and a majority of its board members persists in stridently proclaiming that there are three major national organizations of the blind. NAC is aware of the fact that the Federation is the only large, nationwide, rank-and-file membership organization of the blind, but the hand they are trying to play is obviously strengthened by the attempt to pretend otherwise.

At the end of the meeting the NAC leaders tried to say that they had done all that we had asked. John Taylor replied that we had come to the meeting “with high hopes of reaching an understanding and developing a partnership relationship. However, they have dashed these hopes. We are advising our people to save their picket signs and their money and gird themselves for a continuation of the struggle for true representation. We expect we will see NAC at its next meeting and they will see us.”

Mr. Bleakley and his committee indicated that they would continue to work to get NAC to adopt the agreement which the Federation and the ad hoc committee had worked out in Des Moines, but the majority of the NAC Board obviously came out of the November 7 meeting as unaware

of the real situation as when they went in. Sometimes the NAC people listen, but they never seem to hear. They act as if they believe NAC can continue as usual and that the blind will be taken in by the meaningless gestures they have made.

The kind of talk we are likely to hear during the next few months is illustrated by the following letter from NAC's president, Mr. Daniel Robinson. The tired old NAC cliches are exemplified by Mr. Robinson's statement that it is NAC's "hope that NFB will now decide to accept NAC's invitation to join in increasing the involvement of persons suggested by national organizations of blind and visually handicapped persons in all aspects of NAC's work." When did NAC ever try to increase consumer involvement! They have been beaten and dragged every step of the way toward recognition of the rights of the blind. It is almost indecent for them now to try to take credit for such pauptry concessions as they have made. But let Mr. Robinson speak for himself:

November 8, 1974.

Mr. JOHN TAYLOR,
*National Federation of the Blind,
Des Moines, Iowa.*

DEAR JOHN: Thank you for your attendance at and participation in the NAC membership and board meetings of November 6 and 7. I'm sorry some medical appointments prevented my being there but Dick Bleecker has given me a full report of the meetings and the actions taken to further increase consumer involvement in NAC. It is our hope that NFB will now decide to accept NAC's invitation to join in increasing the involvement of persons suggested by

national organizations of blind and visually handicapped persons in all aspects of NAC's work.

I assure you that we shall welcome your participation. Although progress will be made in cooperation with the other two national organizations of blind persons, it would obviously be better for all blind Americans if all three organizations were cooperating through NAC to improve the standards and operations of agencies and schools in the field.

All good wishes.

Sincerely,

DANIEL D. ROBINSON.

Also of interest is an exchange of letters which I had with Don Staley, the executive director of Recording for the Blind:

DEAR KEN: I have just returned from participating in the NAC meetings held last evening and this morning where I vigorously supported the reports of the ad hoc committees for liaison with national organizations of the blind and to revise bylaws. I think you will be pleased with the results of the meetings.

I hope that you will now agree that our decision not to withdraw from NAC, as you requested, but to remain a member and work within the organization for needed improvements was a wise one.

I sincerely hope we can all now look forward to an era of amicable relations and get on with the work of improving services

for blind people everywhere which is our common goal.

Sincerely,

DONALD STALEY,
Executive Director.

DEAR DON: I was almost as disappointed at the results of the recent NAC meeting as I was surprised by your letter of November 7, 1974. As I understand what occurred, the recommendations of NAC's own ad hoc committee were rejected by the NAC Board. It is true that there was a vote that one-third of the NAC Board should be consumer representatives, but this would seem to be sophistry, not reality, in view of the fact that NAC rejected the proposals which would have made it meaningful.

Specifically, the NAC Board refused to amend the charter and bylaws to expand the Board to thirty-nine. Since there are now twenty-eight people serving on the NAC Board (none of whom are consumer representatives) and since the board may not exceed thirty-five in number, only seven new members could be added. The agreement to give NFB at least ten representatives on the board was rejected. Apparently NAC is still trying to cling to the fiction that there are several sizable membership organizations of the blind in this country—all of approximately equal size and importance. The truth is that the NFB is the only truly large, broadly based, representative nationwide membership organization of blind persons in the country.

The NAC actions at the November 6-7 meeting were disappointing and

unfortunate. We will now redouble our efforts. I believe NAC has sealed its death warrant and that it cannot reform itself. No, Don, I do not think your decision to remain in NAC was wise, but I believe you have acted with sincerity.

I would like to know why you believe the recent NAC meeting offers any hope—in fact, why it does not offer the exact opposite. If the ad hoc committee recommendations can be implemented, NFB will work diligently and in good faith to help make NAC a going concern. In the meantime we will fight harder than we have ever fought before, and I think we will be successful. Lou Rives recently said to me: "NAC is dying." I agree with him.

Hal Bleakley said to NAC on November 7: "NAC is at a crossroads. It must now choose suicide or success." I agree with him. NAC has chosen. It cannot long survive in view of the negative decisions it made.

Cordially,

KENNETH JERNIGAN,
President,
National Federation of the Blind.

P.S. I am sending this correspondence to several hundred people. Therefore, I will not take the trouble to list them all. K.J.

The November 15 meeting between NAC and the representatives of the blind occurred in Chicago as planned. We met at the Palmer House Hotel. Representing HEW, Dr. Adams was the chairman. I represented the NFB, as did John Taylor and Rami Rabby. NAC had four representatives: Hal Bleakley, Howard

Hanson, McAllister Upshaw, and Richard Bleecker. The meeting was almost anticlimactic, being little more than a formality and a restatement of positions. How could it have been otherwise in view of NAC's rejection only a week earlier of the agreement to cooperate with the blind worked out by its own ad hoc committee?

Dr. Bleecker was arrogant, and hostile, not to mention surly and sulky. He said that NAC had now met all the conditions that anybody could reasonably expect and that it had really done all that the Federation had asked it to do—with, perhaps, minor exceptions.

The only new thing which Dr. Bleecker brought up was the astonishing accusation that I had not told the truth when I said that I had informed the NAC Board when I was appointed to it in 1966 that I could not conscientiously support NAC. In view of the many *Monitor* articles on the subject at the time and in view of Dr. tenBroek's extensive correspondence with NAC, Dr. Bleecker's claim is absurd on the face of it. I have never made a secret of the fact that I think NAC was and is harmful to the blind, and I am astounded that even NAC would claim to the contrary.

However, we do not need to speculate about the matter as the following letter will indicate. NAC, of course, will probably contend that the letter is not in their files or that they do not have it or that there has been a misunderstanding or that it is lost or something else equally lame. Let the letter speak for itself:

August 16, 1966.

Mr. ARTHUR L. BRANDON,
*Chairman, Commission on Standards and
Accreditation of Services for the Blind,
New York, New York.*

DEAR MR. BRANDON: I am writing this letter as a follow-up to your invitation to

me (dated May 27, 1966) to serve on the board of directors of the National Accreditation Council and my acceptance (dated June 10, 1966). I want to be certain that you, as well as all others who care to know, are clear concerning my position.

From articles in *The Braille Monitor* and from public statements I have made, you are aware of the fact that I believe COMSTAC has been harmful to the blind. I also believe that its successor agency (the National Accreditation Council) constitutes one of the greatest threats now faced by the blind of our country. It is hard to see how it could be otherwise in view of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the National Accreditation Council. Certainly the Iowa Commission for the Blind (of which I am Director) would not accept accreditation from the National Accreditation Council unless real reforms were made and meaningful consumer representation achieved.

Nevertheless, I am willing to serve on the board if you wish me to do so under these conditions. I will do what I can to try to make the council work, but in good conscience I cannot say that I support what is being done or the way in which the National Accreditation Council has come into being and is likely to operate.

Unless I hear from you further on this matter, I shall assume that the appointment still stands and that you wish me to serve.

Very truly yours,

KENNETH JERNIGAN,
Director, Iowa Commission for the Blind.

As the meeting progressed, I read into the record the following memorandum from James Gashel, our Washington Representative:

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 14, 1974
FROM: James Gashel
TO: Dr. Jernigan
RE: Position of the Blinded Veterans Association concerning NAC.

In correspondence to Members of Congress and in other documents it circulates, NAC has consistently alleged that it is supported by "all organizations of the blind" except NFB. The recently released report by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) says: "Of the three national organizations of the blind in this country, two—the American Council of the Blind and the Blinded Veterans Association—generally support NAC, and the Council is an official sponsor." On Monday of this week, I learned from a leading staff member in the national office of the Blinded Veterans Association that Mr. David Schnair (an executive board member of BVA from New York who attended the last NAC Board of Directors meeting) espoused a similar position at that meeting. Thus some have assumed that NAC's statements concerning the position of the Blinded Veterans Association are in accord with the truth.

This assumption, though, is not necessarily valid. Never in the memory of several of BVA's own leaders has the organization adopted a position endorsing NAC. Leading officials tell me that, along with NFB, BVA supports the general concept of accreditation. BVA national office staff informs me that Mr. Schnair's

statements at last week's NAC Board meeting were not made pursuant to any position adopted by BVA, its executive board, or any authorizing body or agent within the organization—that is, Mr. Schnair's remarks were said to be strictly his own. The GAO statement that BVA "generally supports NAC" is also called into question. Upon checking with the entire national office staff of BVA, I learned that no one was interviewed by GAO and that they had no knowledge of such interviews with any BVA leaders.

All the foregoing suggest that perhaps there are those who have taken it upon themselves to speak for BVA and to advance positions not commonly shared. Unquestionably, there are those individual members within BVA who do support NAC, but it is also a point of fact that there are many who do not.

John Taylor, Rami Rabby, and I said that we had hoped NAC would behave responsibly, but since it had not, the blind would continue (in fact, would redouble) their efforts to reform or eliminate it. Messrs. Bleakley and Hanson indicated their continuing support for the ad hoc committee agreement. Mr. Upshaw was not personally belligerent but indicated no enthusiasm for reform. The meeting ended inconclusively.

As a postscript to it all I received a letter from NAC Board member Dr. John Ferree dated November 22. My response indicates what I think will now happen. We will not grow tired and we will not yield to the people who would custodialize and dominate us. Our course is clear:

DEAR DR. JERNIGAN: In accordance with the decisions of NAC's membership and board at their recent meetings, I am pleased to invite you to send me the names of persons whom you would like to suggest as candidates for membership on NAC's Board of Directors. We are also inviting the American Council of the Blind and the Blind Veterans Association to suggest possible nominees.

As you know, there are, at present, seven vacancies on the board which we expect to fill at the next board meeting. Three are for terms ending at our 1975 annual meeting which will be held next fall; two are for terms ending at the 1976 annual meeting and two are for terms ending at the 1977 annual meeting. You may wish to note which persons you are recommending for which terms.

Enclosed is a copy of the list of criteria the board has established to guide the nominations committee in selecting appropriate candidates. We try to be sure that each nominee meets several criteria and that the total board membership meets all criteria. At present, we need more board members who, in addition to other qualifications, can assist in maintaining NAC's financial support as earlier sources of funds are phased out.

Because there has been some discussion regarding the fiduciary responsibilities of board members, it might be worthwhile for me to repeat for the record the statement of the Senior Attorney, Corporate Division, Office of the Secretary of State of New York (the State in which NAC is incorporated), to the United States General Accounting Office. The statement is included in the GAO report on NAC. It reads: "He (the Senior Attorney) believed

that the binding fiduciary relationship to NAC, which is inherent in board membership, precludes board members from being accountable to or recallable by organizations other than NAC."

Any candidate suggested for NAC's Board should, of course, understand that acceptance of nomination carries with it the commitment to discharge his or her board duties, if elected, in accordance with this fiduciary responsibility and other legal responsibilities of board members.

Please include with your suggestions some biographical information about each of your recommended candidates. We need this, not only to enable the nominations committee to do its job but also for use in the committee report and in any election announcement. Enclosed is a form which may be of use to you in this respect.

Also, please let us have your recommendations on or before January 15, 1975. Our next board meeting will be held earlier than usual and the nominations committee must be able to review all suggestions and prepare its report in time for presentation at that meeting.

We appreciate your interest in NAC and we look forward to working with you to strengthen consumer input—especially of persons suggested by national organizations of blind or other visually handicapped people—on NAC's Board.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

JOHN W. FERREE, M.D.

December 6, 1974.

DEAR DR. FERREE: This will reply to your letter of November 22, 1974, in

which you ask the National Federation of the Blind to submit candidates for consideration for nomination to NAC's Board. Under the circumstances the National Federation of the Blind will not be submitting recommendations for candidates. Since we made it perfectly clear at the NAC Board meeting on November 7 and again in Chicago on November 15 that this would be our position, one has to wonder why you would write the letter you have written.

I assume you did it for the record—to show that NAC is cooperative and reasonable and conciliatory. Well, Dr. Ferree, it won't wash. NAC has never, all statements to the contrary notwithstanding, shown any real interest in having consumer representation on its board or meaningful consumer input at all. It shows none now. Rather, it has maneuvered and gestured and pretended and postured, and it continues to maneuver and gesture and pretend and posture.

Consider, for instance, your quotation from the GAO report to the effect that the Senior Attorney, Corporation Division, Office of the Secretary of State of New York believed that NAC Board members could not be "accountable to or recallable by organizations other than NAC." What a profound and brilliant conclusion! Was it really necessary to seek an opinion from the "Senior Attorney" to know this? It is surprising that such a knotty question was not taken to the Supreme Court of the United States. Of course, it is perfectly obvious that NAC Board members cannot legalistically and technically be accountable to or recallable by anybody outside of NAC. Do you really think this is what we have been talking about all of these months and years? Is it just by chance that the American Foundation for the Blind (also located in New York) has the presidents of certain organizations on its board and that those positions become vacant when the presidencies change?

It isn't, and you know that it isn't. You also know what we have been talking about and suggesting, and you know that it is not what you imply. Consider another example. NAC keeps referring to what it calls the "three national organizations of the blind"—or, sometimes, the "three *major* national organizations of the blind." You know, and we know, and you know that we know why you do this. You are desperately trying to keep from negotiating and dealing with the organized blind movement (in other words, the National Federation of the Blind), but time is running out for you. We are a fact of life, and NAC will have to recognize and deal with us whether it likes it or not.

If NAC really believes that the flimflam it tried at the November 7 board meeting will work, it has less perception than I would have thought. It will be in for a great surprise. The efforts made by the blind in the past to reform NAC have been minor compared to what is now coming. We bear no personal ill will toward any NAC Board member, but we absolutely will not permit a small clique of reactionaries to take control of work for the blind in this country. Too much is at stake. Too many lives will be damaged and blighted.

We offered you cooperation and conciliation, but you would have none of it. The responsibility for what must now follow is yours, not ours. The blind will redouble their efforts with the Congress, HEW, the agencies, the press, and the public at large. NAC has responded negatively to every proposal for reform. It must now reap the results.

Very truly yours,

KENNETH JERNIGAN,
President,
National Federation of the Blind.

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GAO REPORTS ON NAC: AN ANALYSIS

BY

JAMES GASHEL

During part of 1973 and much of 1974, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) studied several issues concerning the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped (NAC) at the request of Congressman John Brademas, Chairman of the Select Subcommittee on Education of the House Committee on Education and Labor. Congressman Brademas' committee has jurisdiction over rehabilitation legislation and oversight responsibility over the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

On September 27, 1974, the GAO issued its report entitled "Charges Made by the National Federation of the Blind Against the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped." The report contains both strengths and weaknesses, and the following is presented as a comment and analysis.

In the "Digest" summarizing the report, one finds a section labelled "Findings and Conclusions." It is under this heading that the casual observer would expect to be enlightened with a run-down of the results of GAO's review. Sadly, though, these expectations are not met. Primarily the section headed "Findings and Conclusions" merely contains an outline of the issues reviewed by GAO. They are as follows:

- (1) Applying NAC accrediting standards and procedures

- (2) Accreditation process
- (3) Consumer participation in accreditation reviews
- (4) NAC policies and procedures on notification of and access to meetings
- (5) Charges that HEW officials misrepresented to Members of Congress the purpose of an Office of Education-funded study concerning accreditation
- (6) Charges regarding independence of SRS review team
- (7) The role of accreditation

From this introduction, it is apparent that GAO investigators were reluctant (for whatever reason it was not disclosed) to actually "get the bear down out of the tree" and deal with the issues head on.

One example of GAO's tendency to skirt the issues is found in the section headed "GAO Observations on Wage and Hour Policies, Rights and Benefits of Clients, and Image of Blindness." It reads as follows:

The workshops had obtained the required sheltered workshop certificates authorizing the payment of less than minimum wages.

The workshops were providing fringe benefits and were distributing personnel manuals in accordance with NAC standards; however, the extent and means for providing employees an opportunity to meet with management to discuss areas of mutual

concern varied. Formal structures for providing client representation either did not exist or were not functioning as intended by management at two of the workshops. At the residential school, which had about 390 students enrolled according to its April 1972 biennial report, there were twenty-two standing committees. These committees, one of which had student representatives, were involved in the NAC self-study at the school.

We did not evaluate the effectiveness of organizational, educational, or public relations programs because of the limited scope of this review.

Where, one asks, is GAO's analysis of the NAC standards themselves? Totally missing, for example, is a statement concerning the adequacy of pay rates in the workshops visited, not to mention the adequacy of the "fringe benefits." On these subjects we are told that proper records are kept and benefits are provided in accordance with NAC standards. One wonders what kind of report would have emerged if, during the time of their investigation, the GAO inspectors' wages and fringe benefits were merely in compliance with NAC standards. Probably there would have been complaints of low pay, sweat-shop conditions, and the like.

Although, as illustrated, the GAO surveyors skirted many of the issues, it would not be entirely accurate to suggest that their report lacks revelation. If one wants to look for it, there is probably something for everybody in this report by GAO.

For example, although they never come out and say so, the reviewers seem to validate the charge that HEW officials misrepresented to Members of Congress the purpose of the Office of Education-contracted study of the

Commissioner of Education's use of accreditation:

NFB believes that HEW officials misrepresented to Members of Congress the purpose of the OE-contracted study and the independence of the SRS review team. . .

A letter from the Administrator, SRS, to a Senator concerning NFB charges against NAC said that:

"Under a current contract, the Commissioner of Education has authorized Brookings Institution to evaluate the forty-five accrediting groups used by OE. NAC, of course, is included in this study."

According to the study's principal investigator, the study does not concern evaluating the accrediting agencies but rather the use of accreditation by OE and other agencies as a condition of eligibility for Federal programs. The investigator advised us that NAC was only one of about fifty recognized accrediting organizations which were included in that study and that it did not warrant special attention.

Also of some considerable interest is the following material uncovered by GAO:

In December 1973 the NAC grant project officer and Director, Office of the Blind and Visually Handicapped, indicated in their reviews of NAC that the project was moving along on schedule, that project goals were being met, and that private funding was increasing while Federal funding remained about the same. . . .

On December 13, 1973, the Grants Management Specialist, Division of Project Grants Administration, SRS, assigned to review the renewal application of NAC, recommended that the project be terminated because after seven years only about twelve percent of the approximately four hundred organizations serving the blind and visually handicapped had been accredited. He estimated that the total project cost would be

about five million dollars. His report said he believed that the NAC objectives would never be accomplished under the present ground rules. . . .

The Director, Division of Project Grants Administration, SRS, told us that the NAC grant was recommended for phaseout in 1975 by the Division of Project Grants Administration because of:

- NAC's poor performance record.
- Low acceptance of NAC accreditation by blind agencies.
- A low cost-benefit ratio.

Substantiating these statements further is the following taken from the GAO report. (Incidentally, it is probably not by accident that this material has not been made public before):

On the basis of NAC's May 9, 1972, long-range plan, the actual number of agencies accredited by June 30, 1974, was about 56 percent of the total projected for that time. The May 6, 1974, long-range plan estimate of 118 NAC-accredited members by the end of 1979 is 47 agencies short of the minimum number of accredited agencies projected for 1976 in the May 9, 1972, long-range plan. In his April 5, 1974, letter to us, the Associate Director said the plan is a rolling forecast that is updated annually.

Under the heading of "Eligibility of Agencies for Federal Support," the GAO investigators shed considerable light on the issue of whether or not NAC accreditation is or will be regarded as totally voluntary—no Federal purse strings attached. In this connection the GAO report says:

On July 2, 1971, the Assistant Administrator for Research and Demonstration, SRS, advised the Executive

Secretary of the Sensory Study Section that in regard to the NAC grant:

"To date this has been a very successful project. However, need exists to extend the evaluation and accreditation process to more agencies. NAC cannot do this by themselves—RSA *must* let the field know this is not only expected but "business" will not be given to agencies which do not have or are [sic] in the process of getting accreditation in three to five years."

We asked the Assistant Administrator for Research and Demonstration if SRS had taken any formal action to implement such a policy. He indicated that this message was conveyed to those working to provide vocational rehabilitation services to the blind; however, neither SRS nor the Rehabilitation Services Administration had issued regulations making NAC accreditation a requirement and condition for receiving Federal funding.

The NAC grant project officer advised us that based on NAC's experience, he believed that to provide the necessary impetus for agencies providing services to the blind to apply for accreditation, the Federal Government would probably have to make accreditation a condition for agencies seeking Federal support.

A related point is the well-known agreement between NAC and National Industries for the Blind (NIB) concerning accreditation of sheltered workshops. While the GAO investigators conclude that workshops desiring to participate in the Wagner-O'Day program are not required to seek accreditation by NAC, they take note of attempts to alter this arrangement and to make what is usually described by NAC as a "statement of understanding" a bona fide, formal, and binding agreement.

Also put to rest once and for all is the NAC contention that its executive committee is virtually without power and advisory in nature. On this issue, the GAO report says:

NAC's bylaws, which can be amended by the corporate membership or by the Board, authorize an Executive Committee consisting of the President of NAC and Board members. The Executive Committee manages and controls NAC activities and affairs and has power between Board meetings to act on behalf of the Board unless specifically prohibited by law or the bylaws.

In fact, although GAO steadfastly refuses to say it, one can find in this report verification of the truth of virtually every charge made by NFB against NAC. On the issue of proper grievance committees in sheltered workshops, GAO discloses that none of the three workshops visited had such a committee in the true sense of the word. Only one workshop had anything remotely resembling such a committee. Of the one workshop, GAO reveals:

The executive vice president of workshop A informed us that an eleven-member work relations committee was to meet quarterly and was to represent a cross section of the service units at the workshop. He stated that the units were to elect their own representatives.

In January 1974 several clients at the workshop indicated that the committee last met in March 1973 and that the representatives were not voted on but were designated by the several supervisors. As a result, the clients did not believe that they had adequate representation with management.

We subsequently discussed the committee with the executive vice president who advised us that the committee had not functioned as intended and management had been unable to find a workable solution to this problem during the five years it had been working on it.

Concerning the issue of interviewing clients and users of service during the on-site reviews of NAC, GAO found that:

According to NAC, the procedure followed at workshops usually includes contacts with clients although there have been exceptions and there is no written directive concerning this.

During the SRS site review of NAC, the NAC Executive Director said that clients located at the workshop could be contacted in the same manner as students but some clients live several miles from the workshops under review. Contacting these clients could make the cost of the team visit prohibitive for these organizations.

GAO also found that no clients or students have served as members of on-site review teams.

On the related point of input from consumer representatives during NAC on-site reviews, GAO makes the following disclosures:

NAC does not have a formal procedure requiring team members to contact representatives of the national organizations of the blind in the area where they are conducting a site visit so that these representatives can present their views. The NAC Executive Director informed those present at the SRS site review that each of the three days of the site visit is a fourteen-hour planned workday and any increases in time would increase the cost to the organization under review.

Having come forth with this validation of NFB charges against NAC, one wonders for a moment why the GAO investigators failed to find fault with such high-handed and downright shameful practices. While GAO gives affirmative testimony to nearly everything we have ever said about NAC's structure and operations, it fails utterly to call for reform and to come down on the side of justice and fair treatment for the blind.

Why must this be so? Can it be that our friends at GAO have fallen prey to some of the NAC thinking? Could it be, perhaps, that they, themselves, have so internalized some of the ancient myths about blindness that they cannot really see the blind as full-fledged citizens, deserving all of the rights and opportunities which such status implies?

Yes, most likely it can. The well-known myths and stereotypes—the image of the abnormal blind—has even penetrated the hallowed halls of GAO. Under the heading “GAO Observations on Notifying Blind Organizations of NAC Visits,” the GAO team suggests that NAC adopt the procedures for interviewing patients and interested consumers used by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH). A detailed explanation of the process is set forth by GAO, and it is further revealed that NAC rejected this suggestion on the theory that such a plan would notify the public when agencies fail to be accredited.

According to NAC, potential legal problems are involved in disclosing the names of organizations which have applied for NAC accreditation before NAC site visits if these organizations are subsequently denied accreditation. If the organization is denied accreditation, this fact would become known when NAC published its list of accredited organizations. If the organization incurs damages because NAC denied it accreditation, NAC could face court action.

This admission may suggest why only one agency of those applying has so far failed to achieve NAC accreditation.

To the credit of the reviewers, they do take the position that consumers of services to the blind should be informed when an agency fails accreditation, but the fact that

they would pick an example of an accreditation system operating in a hospital setting and consider this analagous to accreditation in work with the blind speaks volumes for what is going on in their minds. Even at GAO, the blind are not really considered to be normal. They are patients, and services provided by agencies established for their benefit are more like the services of a hospital than those of a college, a law school, or even a high school. Thus, while the patients do have the right to know if their hospital fails to be accredited, we must not become too concerned or upset if our representatives cannot serve on the board or participate in decision-making.

Aside from the myth of the helpless blind, at least two other myths stalk the halls of GAO. The first of these is found on page two under the general heading of National Organizations of the Blind. Indeed, such a catagory, itself, is reminiscent of the days when NAC's own Ann New told us that “all organizations of the blind with the single exception of NFB, cooperate completely with NAC.” Although it can be said that even the GAO could not avoid acknowledging the fact that NFB is the largest of the “National Organizations of the Blind,” the way in which these organizations are presented is, to say the least, interesting. The first of the three “National Organizations of the Blind” listed by GAO is the NFB. In one brief paragraph the activities and purposes of the Nation's largest organization of the blind are set forth. This section comprises approximately one third of a page (eleven lines of type).

The second organization listed with an equivalent subheading is the American Council of the Blind. According to GAO,

the ACB is truly national in character and comprehensive in its scope of activity. GAO states that ACB "claims" a national membership of ten thousand. Apparently, ACB is so important and so prominent on the national scene that it requires an entire page and twenty-four lines of type to describe its work.

The third of these "National Organizations of the Blind" is the Blinded Veterans Association, consisting of some 1,777 members according to GAO. Again, the heading is equivalent and the relative space devoted to the description of BVA's activities is all out of proportion to its size—one half page and fifteen lines of type.

It is only too plain from the foregoing that the net effect of this presentation is to give legitimacy and superior status to the ACB and to suggest that both the BVA and the ACB are fully as large and completely as active as the true organization representing the Nation's blind. In fact, although the GAO entitled its report "Charges Made by the National Federation of the Blind Against the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped," the investigators repeatedly refer to the "three national organizations of the blind" as one entity, and they take the well-known but totally misleading position that "two out of three national organizations of the blind" support NAC and only one does not.

The second of these myths fostered by GAO is related to the first. Under the heading "Acceptance of NAC Standards," GAO makes the following statement:

Of the three national organizations of the blind in this country, two—the American Council of the Blind and the Blinded Veterans Association—generally support NAC, and the Council is an official sponsor.

This statement, similar to those found in NAC correspondence with Members of Congress, accurately sets forth, so far as we can determine, the position of ACB with respect to NAC. The matter of BVA's "general support" of NAC is not, however, as clear as NAC and GAO suggest. Upon checking with BVA leaders and the entire national office staff, we found that, like NFB, BVA supports the concept of accreditation. BVA has not, however, adopted a position either "generally" (or specifically) supporting NAC. None of the BVA officials we contacted were interviewed by GAO nor were they aware of any such interviews with other BVA representatives.

Also under the heading of "Acceptance of NAC Standards," GAO tells us that NAC is supported by virtually every outfit known to be working with the blind. The GAO list reads as follows:

American Council of the Blind
Blinded Veterans Association
Association for Education of the
Visually Handicapped
American Association of Workers
for the Blind
American Foundation for the Blind
National Society for the Prevention
of Blindness
American Foundation for the
Overseas Blind
American Library Association
National Braille Association, Inc.
National Industries for the Blind
National Council of State Agencies
for the Blind

Council of State Administrators
of Vocational Rehabilitation
Choice Magazine Listening
Arkansas Chapter of the American
Association of Workers for the Blind
New York State Federation of Workers
for the Blind

That GAO failed to include the heading "Rejection of NAC Standards" can only be construed as a comment on GAO's thoroughness, or perhaps more accurately, its objectivity. Under such ground rules it would not be difficult for us to produce an equivalent list. Since, for example, the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB) is listed along with several of its state chapters, we might mention that all NFB state affiliates and local chapters (in excess of four hundred) are counted among those rejecting NAC standards. Incidentally, with respect to the subject of AAWB, and its state chapters, one might ask why GAO failed to note that the Ohio chapter decided, by a margin of two to one, not to give its endorsement to NAC.

Thus, it would appear that GAO neglected to check its facts carefully in this portion of its report. Actually, the list of NAC supporters appears simply to have been lifted from NAC literature and incorporated into the study. If the GAO investigators had truly maintained their reputation for scrupulous and thorough reporting, they would undoubtedly have listed the several public and private agencies which have declared that they will not seek NAC accreditation. They would also have reported that the American Foundation for the Overseas Blind is simply a second listing for the American Foundation for the Blind, and they would have disclosed that the American Library Association has several times declared that

the NAC standards are not useful for providing quality library services. Also there is some question of the extent to which the other organizations listed actually do support NAC and there is no indication by GAO that these endorsements were verified.

Chapter 7 of GAO's report is entitled "Agency Comments." Naturally, it contains the usual talk about welcoming the study but it also discloses that our friends at GAO felt somehow compelled to share their "findings" with NAC and SRS officials before revealing them to Congressman Brademas or to the blind. As indicated previously, the GAO report purports to be an analysis of "Charges Made by the National Federation of the Blind Against the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped." Apparently, GAO could not bring itself to present fully both points of view. Fairness and justice, it seems, would dictate that the organization truly involved in reforming NAC should be given an equal forum for the expression of its position. That it seems appropriate not to offer the very people whose lives are most directly affected the opportunity and the courtesy of presenting their views speaks for itself.

But we will not be put off and we will not have our voices ignored. We have read the GAO report, and we think we understand what is being said. We also think we understand what is not being said, or rather, what is implied by what remains unsaid. The foregoing is presented here for all to read and ponder. □

A HAPPY NOTE

BY

RITA CHERNOW

October 24, 1974, was American Foundation Day with VIP's including Peter Salmon and Senator Javits attending ceremonies at the American Foundation for the Blind. But don't worry, the Federation was there also with NAC leaflets. You just can't believe how embarrassed the Foundation was when Senator Javits stopped to take a leaflet and shake hands. Although various staff members of the Foundation came out of the building and tried to indulge us in an argument, we just went about our business of leafletting. Although some Foundation staff members were obviously hostile and

angry toward us, many others were shocked to find us outside the facility on their very special day. To say the least, we put the icing on the cake.

Earlier this same day, through the efforts of one of our chapter members, I was able to make statements to two radio stations with regard to the NAC situation—such statements being broadcast while the Foundation was busy celebrating. A reporter who was present, apparently to cover the indoor activities, appeared more interested in the outdoor activities, and did take some pictures. It was a fun day. □

CONVENTION QUESTIONS ANSWERED:
THE JERNIGAN-WHITTIER CORRESPONDENCE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION,
AND WELFARE,
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION,
Baltimore, Maryland, October 4, 1974.

Mr. KENNETH JERNIGAN,
*President, National Federation of the Blind,
Des Moines, Iowa.*

DEAR FRIEND JERNIGAN: What a pleasure it was for me to speak at the Convention of the National Federation of the Blind in Chicago in July. Since that time, my staff and I have had an opportunity to take a close look at the questions posed by members of the audience following my remarks. Also, copies of the resolutions adopted at your Convention and bearing upon the Supplemental Security Income program were received and these resolutions have

been carefully reviewed. I am pleased, therefore, to have this opportunity to respond to the questions and resolutions in order that you may share this information with your membership in whatever way you wish.

With regard to the questions (a list of which are enclosed with our answers) let me point out that there was a large audience and it may be that we did not take down all of them. If you should find that there were other questions that do not appear on this list, or if you feel any of the answers need further elaboration, please let me know.

Now I would like to comment on the resolutions that relate to the Supplemental Security Income program. Before doing so, let me first commend you on having such a

productive Resolutions Committee this year.

Resolution 74-01 proposes that the states supplement the Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment by fifty percent. It may well be that as the states gain experience with this new program that many of them will elect to adopt the type of state supplementation formula that you suggest. States like California and Massachusetts already supplement the Federal SSI payment by more than fifty percent and no doubt other states will be increasing their levels of supplementation during the next few months.

As you know, states are required to maintain their levels of payments to those blind beneficiaries who were converted from state assistance programs. While the amount of supplementation paid to new applicants is optional with the states, our experience with what has been done by the states to date is encouraging.

Resolution 74-02 called for a cost-of-living escalator clause to be added to the Supplemental Security Income program in order that payments can be adjusted to offset rises in the costs of living. On August 7, 1974, the President signed H.R. 8217. Section 1617 was added to title XVI and provides that whenever in the future there is an increase in title II benefits as a result of section 215(i) of title II, based on changes in cost of living, SSI benefit rates will also increase. The increase in SSI will be equal to the same percentage, but subject to special rounding rules.

You have proposed the liberalization of deeming provisions with respect to the earnings of an ineligible spouse in Resolution 74-03. We have already given

considerable thought to what you propose and we will continue to study what effect various deductions from the earnings of an ineligible spouse would have on our program. You listed some excellent items for us to consider such as "job related" expenses, "support" for "minor" children, and "payments on debts for necessities," as well as applying deeming rules to "net" rather than "gross" earnings.

I was aware when I spoke to your membership that one of your major concerns was that new applicants for Supplemental Security Income, as well as others who might wish to do so be allowed to change categories such as from aged to blind. As you brought to my attention, there are a number of states that pay a higher level of state supplement to blind persons and that blind persons over the age of sixty-five were being enrolled in our program as aged rather than as blind.

Information regarding this change in policy has already been sent out to all of our Social Security district and branch offices. It was a real pleasure for me to be able to announce that this change was being made while I was attending your Convention in Chicago.

The Bureau of Supplemental Security Income appreciates its fine working relationship with national organizations like the National Federation of the Blind. Whenever I can be of further assistance, please let me hear from you.

Warmly and sincerely,

SUMNER G. WHITTIER,
Director,
Bureau of Supplemental Security Income
for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled.

Question: A California Federation member asked if Mr. Whittier and the Social Security legal staff could prevail on the Honorable Wilbur Mills concerning legislation that would liberalize the title II test of substantial gainful activity for blind beneficiaries.

Answer: It is our understanding that the bill to which you refer is H.R. 3153. This bill contains a number of social security amendments, some of which are of a technical nature. We are told that this bill may possibly be taken up again in Conference before the end of the current session of Congress.

Meanwhile an important decision has been made that bears directly on your question about the dollar amount that constitutes substantial gainful activity. The September 11, 1974 *Federal Register* contains proposed changes in the regulations which increase the upper limit of earnings from \$140 to \$200 as a test of a beneficiary's ability to work unless there is evidence to the contrary. In the case of blind persons, this dollar amount is applicable only to the Social Security Disability Insurance program. Under the Supplemental Security Income program, blind beneficiaries who are employed are entitled to deduct work expenses and certain income disregards and may continue to receive benefits, after a trial work period, until their level of earnings is high enough to cancel out the monthly benefit amount. After earnings of a blind worker reach a certain level, depending on the amount of eligible deductions, benefit amounts decline as earnings rise since there is a fifty percent reduction in SSI payments based upon the amount of countable earned income.

Question: Section 1614.1—Deeming of income when living with an ineligible spouse, was cited as a concern because the ineligible spouse is not permitted to have a variety of work-related expenses.

Answer: The Act provides for exclusion of an amount equal to any expense attributable to the earning of any income of an eligible blind individual. No other beneficiaries are treated as liberally in the Act.

The regulations establish the rules for deeming income of an ineligible spouse to an eligible individual when they live together. There is an allocation of \$65 per month subtracted from earned income, in addition to the \$73 (effective July 1974) allocated to an ineligible spouse from his or her income, in figuring the amounts deemed. The purpose of the \$65 allocation is to take into account the basic withholding and working expenses of an ineligible spouse who works.

In families where the ineligible spouse has income and there are ineligible children, an amount is allocated to each child less the amount of each child's income. This allocation increases the gross income for such families.

Question: Concern was raised regarding the requirement that there be concurrent filing for both Social Security disability insurance benefits and Supplemental Security Income benefits in that this joint filing delayed the processing of the application.

Answer: We are always concerned about the problem of possible delay when a person files for two or more SSA programs. These concurrent (combined) claims

receive a great deal of special attention. There is nothing in the medical aspects of the adjudicative process which would add a greater delay potential to a concurrent SSI disability/blindness and title II disability claim. Similarly, there is not added delay potential in the district office activities to process such claims. All claims requiring adjudication of disability and blindness (not previously established by SSA) go from district offices to state disability determination service agencies. These state agencies have the authority to expedite SSI disability and blindness determinations in any claim situation, and are doing so. We are currently working to see if new procedures can be devised to further expedite processing of all claims based on disability or blindness, and are following up claims which seem to be taking longer than average as they are identified by claims control procedures.

Question: John Taylor of Iowa raised a question concerning vocational rehabilitation clients in Alabama who were concerned about losing their SSI benefits because of services received from the vocational rehabilitation agency. These clients were receiving training in a facility which provided room and board and apparently a Social Security Administration memorandum gave the impression room and board would be counted as unearned income under these circumstances.

Answer: Under the Act and the interim regulations, payments made to a facility on behalf of a recipient lead to counting as unearned income the value of the support and maintenance the facility provides. An exception is made in connection with inpatient stays for medical or remedial care. Based on these requirements,

vocational rehabilitation payments to facilities to provide a recipient with shelter and food for a stay which is not a medical confinement, cause counting as income the value of any support, and maintenance provided. But this does not apply if there is an approved plan for achieving self-support which excludes any income from this source.

The memorandum referred to in the comment did not explain excluding income under approved plans for achieving self-support. Since that time, the regional office released a program circular to alert offices to consider and develop plans for achieving self-support, in order to assist any claimants and recipients whose eligibility for or amounts of payments are adversely affected by the present requirement. We are recommending to the department policy changes which permit evaluating all Federal and Federal/state programs to decide whether a program complements the SSI program. If it does, benefits from the program could be excluded from counting as income or resources. In the meantime, we must apply the requirements explained above.

Question: Comments and questions were raised that, under the former state plan for Aid to the Blind and Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled, authorization to purchase food stamps was enclosed with the monthly payment checks. Since the SSI program replaced the adult assistance programs, the SSI check is delivered without the food stamp card. Question was raised, "Is this not a slip away from human dignity?"

Answer: Under section 10(c) of the Food Stamp Act of 1964, states are required to have procedures under which participating

households may elect to have charges for the coupon allotment deducted from a public assistance grant (payment) under any federally aided program, and to have the coupon allotment distributed with the grant. Implementation of this provision was eased by the fact that usually the state agency administering the federally aided assistance program also ran the food stamp program for the Department of Agriculture. The SSI program is a major change because of a completely different set of circumstances. There is no similar provision of law relating to the SSI program. Indeed, such a provision, at best, would make administration very difficult, if not impossible, since different agencies now administer each program. It is an important fact that the programs overlap, but are not congruent. SSI eligibles are not the only people who qualify for food stamps, and an agency running a food stamp program would still have to be able to take care of other eligibles. Strong coordination between that agency and SSA would be needed. In effect, carrying out the food stamp program would become much more difficult for the administering agency.

We find many advantages to colocation and common efforts in programs, as well as many problems and disadvantages. We would support development of models and their evaluation and comparison. We think that is essential before taking a position for or against such major changes.

Question: Michigan representative cited a "Catch-22" situation that Vocational Rehabilitation requires an applicant to file for SSI before acceptance to their program and that district offices in Michigan require that the applicant apply for Vocational Rehabilitation services before finalizing the SSI application.

Answer: Our staff has inquired about the situation as described by the Michigan delegate and has not found a situation thus far in which either a Social Security district office or a state rehabilitation agency has referred an individual to the other program before accepting an application. However, we understand that in Michigan and in a number of other states, rehabilitation clients are advised to enroll in the Supplemental Security Income program for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled in order to receive monthly benefits that can be applied toward meeting the cost of room and board where these items are necessary to the attainment of an objective under a plan for self-support. In such instances, referrals would be made from rehabilitation agencies to Social Security district offices. Also, under the law and regulations governing the operation of the Supplemental Security Income program, all blind and disabled persons under the age of sixty-five are referred for services available through the designated state Vocational Rehabilitation agency.

Question: Michigan member: "Can a person gainfully employed be ineligible for SSI?"

Answer: A person who is gainfully employed can be ineligible or eligible for SSI. Earnings are significant in figuring out a person's eligibility based on income. It is important to keep in mind that there is additional exclusion of sixty-five dollars plus one-half of the remainder which applies to the monthly earned income (gross wages or net earnings from self-employment). It is also important to keep in mind that a blind person who applied for benefits prior to age sixty-five can qualify for the exclusion from income of the amounts of expenses related to work.

Work activity and earnings is an issue in deciding if a person is disabled. People who are able to perform work and engage in substantial gainful activity are not considered to meet the disability requirements. However, to be considered to be blind for SSI purposes does not require that a person not be working. His ability or lack of ability to engage in substantial gainful activity is beside the point, if he is blind according to the provision. A blind person's earnings are important only in deciding his eligibility based on income. This is the same situation that applies to people who are age sixty-five or older.

Because the State of Michigan provides an SSA administered optional supplement, it takes a higher level of earnings from work to make a person ineligible because of his income there. For example, a blind person who is working and lives with a spouse and whose earnings are under \$6,780 plus work expenses per year could qualify for some optional supplementation, depending on his living arrangements, and the other eligibility factors.

Question: What is the maximum income you can earn and be eligible for SSI? This participant stated he earns \$3,000 yearly and lives in the State of Washington. He was referred to the district office to review his eligibility for optional supplementation.

Answer: The maximum amount a resident of Washington can earn and still be eligible for SSI and State supplementation will depend upon his living arrangements and geographic area of residence because of the SSI rules and the optional supplementary payment levels in Washington State. For example, some State supplementation is payable up to a level of \$6,842 plus working expenses per year to some blind

individuals who work and live with a spouse, and up to \$5,112 plus working expenses per year to some blind individuals who work and live alone. A person who earns \$3,000 per year should definitely apply and obtain a decision. Extremely important is the fact that a blind person under age sixty-five who works can qualify for the exclusion from income of the amounts of expenses related to work. The upper level for a working person who is blind really depends on the amount of work-related expenses.

Question: When other relatives live in the home of an SSI recipient, does their income count? Does the deeming provision apply or the one-third reduction?

Answer: The requirements which can cause the income or the presence of relatives in the same household to affect a person who is eligible for the SSI program are complex. There are a number of possibilities, all of which depend on the facts in a case.

- a. A person who is a head of a household which includes relatives can be affected by the income of a spouse who is ineligible. In finding the amount of the spouse's income to be deemed to be the person's, SSA first subtracts allocations of income for the spouse and each of any ineligible children in the household. (Each ineligible child's income reduces the allocation for him.) When the spouse is also eligible, then it is their combined income which SSA evaluates to determine eligibility and payment amounts.
- b. A person who is twenty-one or older and not a head of a household which

includes relatives can be affected by the income of a spouse, exactly as explained in a. In addition, the person's status (and the spouse's status) in the household requires evaluation. If the household is another individual's home and the individual is providing support and maintenance in-kind to the person (and the spouse, if there is one), the one-third reduction applies in figuring the SSI standard payment amounts.

- c. A person who is 20 or younger and lives in a parental household is a "child" for SSI purposes if not married and age 18 or younger or age 18 through 20 and a student. (People can actually be children for SSI purposes through age 21, but the only significance of the "child" status at age 21 is in the amount of their earned income which counts.) A "child" age 20 or younger is affected by the income of the parent and the spouse of a parent in the household. In finding the amount of parental income to be deemed to be the "child's," SSA first subtracts allocations of income for the parents and each of any ineligible children in the household. (Each ineligible child's income reduces the allocation for him.) The one-third reduction procedure does not apply to a "child" age 20 or younger living in a parental household.
- d. The one-third reduction procedure can apply to a person who is a "child" for SSI purposes and lives in the household of a relative who is not a parent or spouse of a

parent. By definition, a "child" is not married or a head of a household. The one-third reduction procedure applies if the relative is furnishing support and maintenance in-kind to the "child" in the household.

- e. In deciding if the one-third reduction procedure applies, SSA evaluates the facts and excludes sharing situations and full payment situations. In order for the procedures to apply, support and maintenance in-kind must be furnished. Case evaluation to decide this issue is complicated and requires having detailed information on the household situation.
- f. Other than as explained above, in discussing ineligible spouses, parents, and the spouses of parents, there is no deeming of income or relatives. However, other relatives can contribute to a person who is eligible for the SSI program or to those whose income can be deemed or to ineligible children in a household where an ineligible spouse has income. Such contributions which beneficiaries can use to meet basic needs (food, shelter, clothing) are income to them from the relatives, unless the contributions are the basis for applying the one-third reduction in lieu of counting the income.

Question: Why are Social Security title II increases deducted from the SSI payment?

Answer: The law requires that SSA count title II benefits as income for SSI program

purposes. SSA must take into account any increase or decrease in the benefits due under title II from one month to another. These requirements mean a title II increase can cause a person to receive lower payments or become ineligible for SSI (or any SSA-administered supplement) because of higher income. Title II increases can result from changes in law, cost of living, beneficiary classification, recomputations and recalculations, deduction status, reduction status, and so forth. Counting income is required because one of the characteristics of the SSI program is that it provides protection up to fixed levels of income. As a result, payments depend on income, and the people whose income exceeds these levels become ineligible for the program.

Recent legislation signed into law requires an SSI increase in some amount in the future, whenever title II benefits increase because of the title II "cost of living" provision. This means that the requirements to count title II "cost of living" increases will not cause an equivalent reduction in SSI payments. The exact effect on the total income of a person who receives both will depend on the amounts in his particular case.

Question: Comment was made by one member of the audience that his question was pertinent to older people—"If you retire and begin to receive Social Security payments, will you lose your disregards?" (Probably he meant income disregards under the State Aid to the Blind plan that was in effect through December 1973.)

Answer—For Guidance Only: We can state that filing for title II benefits which might be due is required under the SSI program rules. There is no choice. Becoming entitled

and receiving title II benefits always affects a person's status in the SSI program. If a person who was eligible for state adult assistance and was converted to the SSI program was potentially eligible for title II, he might not have filed, because in the grant programs such filing was not required. At conversion to SSI or state supplementation, he must file for benefits. It may turn out that the title II benefits cause him to become ineligible for SSI and/or state supplementation, or that the benefits merely lower the amounts of his SSI program payments. As appropriate, state plan requirements must be considered when we evaluate resources and income of the blind in deciding the continuing eligibility and payments of converted recipients. General statements such as these may not apply to a particular case. Each case is carefully developed so that an individual applicant or beneficiary may receive maximum payments under one or both of the Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND,
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
Des Moines, Iowa, November 5, 1974.

Mr. SUMNER G. WHITTIER,
*Director, Bureau of Supplemental Security
Income for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled,
Social Security Administration,
Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare,
Baltimore, Maryland.*

DEAR MR. WHITTIER: I have your letter of October 4, 1974, along with the answers to the questions which were raised at the NFB Convention this summer; and I thank you not only for your letter but also for following through and handling our

questions in such depth. I am sending this material to a number of other Federation leaders, including the editor of *The Braille Monitor*. We will see that your answers receive wide circulation among the blind. Whether this will be done through *The Monitor* or by presidential release or by some other method I cannot say at this time, but it will be done.

Our members feel warm regard and high esteem for you, and I want to take this

opportunity to tell you once again how pleased we were to have you at our Convention this summer. We feel that you are a friend to our Federation and, thus, to the blind of the country.

Cordially,

KENNETH JERNIGAN,
President,
National Federation of the Blind.

□

INDIANA WORKERS STRIKE FOR RIGHTS

BY

MARC MAURER

The Evansville Association for the Blind, a NAC-accredited agency, recently discovered that blind people are not as docile as it had assumed. On Thursday evening, October 31, The Evansville Association announced to the workers in the Whirlpool division that it had done a secret time study of their work. The result of the time study showed the wages of these workers must be reduced anywhere from \$58 to \$20 a week. The highest paid worker had been receiving \$174 a week and would henceforth receive \$116. Of course, most workers don't receive anywhere near that amount of money.

The workers decided to talk with the director of the Evansville Association, Mr. Frank Kern. Mr. Kern waited until the workers had said their say and told them that there would be no negotiation with respect to wages. If the workers didn't like what they were getting, they could quit. The strike was called. On Monday morning, November 4, the workers of the Whirlpool division and some others from the mop shop were outside on the picket line. The

picket lines were honored by Whirlpool trucks and others. The trucks of the Evansville Association did not, however, honor the picket lines. Frank Kern at one point pushed several pickets out of the way so that the trucks of the association could go through. Some of the pickets had interesting stories to tell. One person was receiving \$1.40 an hour. This person had been working for the Evansville Association for seven years. She had missed only half a day's work in the last year but was still classified as a part-time, temporary employee-trainee. She was not insured, did not receive vacation with pay, holidays with pay, or any sick leave.

On Sunday, November 3, some of the workers received telephone calls. The callers informed them that they must not strike and must not help the dissidents or they would never be allowed to come back to work.

Following the day-long picketing, the executive director and the president of the board of the Evansville Association for the

Blind met with the leaders of the striking workers to negotiate. The results of that meeting are that the workers at the Evansville Association have established the right to negotiate with respect to wages and working conditions. It was further decided that wages would not be cut until another time study could be performed. The person to do that time study would be

mutually selected by the workers and management. And, finally, a grievance committee of the workers was established to deal with the board of directors. No longer can Frank Kern dictate terms, conditions, and policies to the workers. There is now a process for appeal to the board of directors. The Indiana Council of the Blind will continue to support the workers in this fight to gain their rights. □

TENNESSEE WORKERS WIN SOME RIGHTS

BY

LEV WILLIAMS

Editor's Note.—Lev Williams is president of the Tennessee affiliate and the following is from a report written at the end of October.

You are probably interested in the outcome of the strike situation we had here. You will be pleased to learn that we did get a dollar ninety per hour for the least paid worker at the workshops. Some of the more skilled workers get better than two dollars per hour. We also won some other considerations which will, in the long run, make things better in the workshops. I believe, however, that the most important element in the victory is the fact that we brought the problems of the blind to the attention of the public. This is what I have

been trying to get done for several years now. I now believe that we have a lot of people listening to us. It seems that the chances of removing the agency for the blind from the Welfare Department are better than ever. The thing that bothers me about the move is that there is some talk of putting the agency in the Department of Education. That would be better than what we have because it would operate almost autonomously. Of course, we will hold out to the end for a completely separate agency. The significant thing about it all is the fact that we do have the politicians and governmental officials listening for a change. That in itself is a major accomplishment. We will continue fighting no matter what turn the events take. We simply can't stop now. □

JURY DUTY IN D.C.

BY

JIM DOHERTY

Editor's Note.—Jim Doherty is a member of the District of Columbia affiliate of the NFB.

One of the obligations of citizenship is to serve as a juror when summoned by the local or Federal judiciary. Blind people have often been "excused" from this duty by paternalistic judges. In the District of Columbia, however, I served my month's term with no problem, after some slight interference the first day.

My reporting date was August 6. Since it was summer and some of the superior court judges were on vacation, only about three hundred persons were summoned for this term. (During heavy-schedule periods, the number may go as high as eight hundred.) My first bit of interference came from a court secretary who walked into the building and up to the assembly area with me. She seemed genuinely surprised that I really wanted to serve. Soon after leaving me, she returned to say that she had informed the chief judge's secretary that I was there and that the court clerk would come to talk with me. I told her that was all unnecessary, but, as usual with that type, it made no impression. She proceeded to tell the bailiff of her accomplishment, so when he began ushering the group into the orientation room, he said I could wait outside until the clerk arrived. I said there was no need and went on into the room. Later, I heard the bailiff tell the clerk that I had insisted on coming in with the group. I didn't hear the clerk's reply, but he never did come to talk with me.

Orientation consisted of a review by the chief judge of the jury selection process and a film that followed a case through from selection to verdict. After this, we were taken to the jury lounge, which was to be our home for the next month. We assembled there each morning at nine for roll call. Except for an hour's lunch break, we remained in the lounge or just outside its doors until five in the afternoon. The lounge consisted of three adjoining rooms. Two contained TV sets, and all were equipped with playing cards, checkers, and magazines. These were all very necessary because for most of the month we just sat in the lounge waiting to be called. When a call came, everything stopped while the jury officer or his assistant read a list of twenty-five to fifty names. Those called reported to one of the forty-four superior court rooms.

When the panel had been sworn in, the presiding judge or the prosecuting attorney presented the complainant, the defendant, the defense attorney, and all witnesses for both sides. A prospective juror who was acquainted with any of these people would, of course, be excused immediately. The prosecutor then described the alleged crime and read the charges against the defendant. Following this presentation, each attorney asked a series of general questions aimed at weeding out jurors with some prejudice or preconceived notion. For example: "Does any one of you work for the company that was robbed?" "Is any member of your family a law enforcement officer?" "Have you ever been the victim of a similar attack?"

The court clerk then selected the jurors and alternates who would hear the case. At any point during this part of the process, either attorney could ask that a particular juror be replaced. He does not have to explain why he challenges a juror. When an acceptable jury had been selected, the remaining members of the panel went back to the lounge to wait for another call.

I was chosen for the jury the first time I went out on a panel. Two other times, I was selected but challenged. I was part of six other panels but not selected. Many in the group of three hundred complained

that they spent the whole month in the lounge, never serving on a case, while some had served on several cases. This unequal distribution of assignments is just one of the things wrong with the jury selection process, but that's not the important point here. What is important is that at no time during the month did I sense discrimination or deferential treatment. I was never the only one challenged or left unselected. All in all, my experience seemed about average. Despite the various little inconveniences, it was an interesting experience, and I urge any blind person who receives a summons to jury duty to insist on his ability to fulfill that obligation. □

THE NFB HELPS BLIND CHILDREN

The Teachers Division of the National Federation of the Blind presents a new and valuable booklet about the education of blind children and youth: *Your School Includes a Blind Student*, by Doris Willoughby, Shirley Lansing Crawford, Mary Barber, and Patricia Maurer. This booklet is helpful to regular classroom teachers, itinerant or resource teachers, parents, counselors, and anyone else working with blind youngsters, from preschool through the twelfth grade. NFB philosophy is incorporated throughout.

The booklet is directed to the regular classroom teacher who has a blind student in his class and who has had no previous experience with blindness. It describes methods that a student may use, and emphasized that, with proper arrangements, the classroom teacher need not give a student an extraordinary amount of attention just because he is blind. The role of a good resource or itinerant teacher

is described, and it is pointed out that if such a teacher is not available, most older students with adequate preparation are able to succeed in a regular school anyway. Although the booklet does not discuss residential schools in any detail, it explains that a residential school is desirable for some students under some circumstances.

Inkprint copies (regular size print) are available without cost from the Des Moines Office of the Federation: 218 Randolph Hotel, Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

Braille copies are available through the president of the Teachers Division: send \$4.85 to Mr. Robert Acosta, 20734C Devonshire Street, Chatsworth, California 91311.

Some of the problems involved are well illustrated in the following correspondence:

October 28, 1974.

DEAR BLANK: Bob Acosta has suggested I write to you with comments on your child's school placement and on the role of a "resource teacher" versus an "itinerant teacher."

In our booklet, *Your School Includes a Blind Student*, we sometimes used the terms "resource teacher" and "itinerant teacher" interchangeably. We will make this more clear in our next edition, and we thank you for pointing out this source of possible confusion. An itinerant teacher certainly can work successfully with a young beginning Braille student if enough time is allotted to him.

We also sometimes used the term, "resource person," to help indicate that under some circumstances the person offering help need not be a certified teacher. It is possible, for example, if advice is available from someone who does have specific knowledge regarding the education of blind children, for an aide who knows Braille to transcribe materials and help the child follow the directions of the classroom teacher who does not know Braille.

I am delighted to hear that your child is enrolled in his regular neighborhood school, and certainly hope that he will be able to continue there.

I do hope that it will soon be possible for your child to receive beginning travel instruction with the long white cane. In the Des Moines area we begin teaching the use of the cane in kindergarten, or with preschoolers if time can be arranged.

Since I understand you are having difficulty in securing travel instruction for

your child, I shall mention a few thoughts which may be helpful to you in discussing the reasons why he should have such instruction immediately.

It is sometimes said that the young child is not yet "ready" for cane travel. It may be said that he cannot yet take responsibility for himself, find his way around in complex or dangerous situations, learn adequate traffic safety rules, et cetera. I would respond by saying that although he is not yet ready for complete independence or complex travel situations, he is indeed ready for beginning work in a protected situation. The first-grader should not be asked to cross a busy street unaided; however, this has no bearing on whether he should be asked to walk down the school hallway unaided. The normal blind first-grader can learn, with practice, to walk alone with the cane in a safe environment such as the school building. In some circumstances he may need to be watched or accompanied; however, he will not need to be *led* by the other person. He can work toward using the cane with perfect form and technique; however, if he is not yet able to achieve perfect form he is still learning to rely on the cane instead of on less effective techniques. A child who begins this way will achieve greater independence and better form at an earlier age than a child who is denied an early start. Furthermore, many problems are *prevented* by starting the cane early—poor posture, shuffling feet, slow and uncertain gait, awkward groping, believing that he cannot travel effectively alone, et cetera.

I would compare this idea of beginning cane travel with the first efforts of any child to walk and to speak. The eighteen-month-old child has many imperfections in his way of walking, and he certainly should not be allowed to walk

everywhere unsupervised; however, we do not pen him up and forbid him to walk at all because he is "not ready to walk in a mature manner." The same child has a very small vocabulary, and little or no grammar; yet we do not forbid him to talk because he is "not ready for mature speech." Refusing to allow a normal eighteen-month-old child to start to walk and talk, hesitantly and imperfectly, would interfere with his normal development. Refusing to let a normal young blind child start to use a cane by the age of five or six has the same result.

If the problem in securing travel instruction is related to the allotment of teacher time, many alternatives could be explored. Perhaps the child could be transported to the travel teacher for

twice-a-week lessons, for example, and you and his other teachers could learn a little about cane travel so as to help support his learning.

Since I am not certain you have the latest edition of our booklet, which contains specific suggestions for younger children, I am sending you a copy.

You have my permission to share this letter with anyone you wish, and I hope that I have been of some help. Please write again at any time if I might be of any further help.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. D. CURTIS WILLOUGHBY.

□

GEORGIA CONVENTION

BY

JANET CLARY

The National Federation of the Blind of Georgia held its second annual convention Saturday, November 9, 1974, at the Holiday Inn in downtown Atlanta. Ralph Sanders, Second Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind and president of the Arkansas affiliate, brought us up to date on the NAC issue, including the previous week's activities in New York City. Judy Miller, president of the Denver, Colorado, chapter of the NFB, discussed "Teaching and the Blind," giving an account of her recent attempts to secure a teaching position in the Denver public school system. A panel discussion on library services and subregional libraries in Georgia featured Carl Sandstedt, librarian consultant, Georgia State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped;

Anderson Frazer, director of a subregional library; and Janet Clary, a subregional borrower. Members who attended the NFB Convention in Chicago gave brief reports.

During the past year our main accomplishments, as outlined by the president, were the publication of a newsletter and the formation of the Southwest Georgia chapter of NFBG. Resolutions passed by the convention were: to set up a memorial award in honor of the late Aline Harrell Graham, who devoted much time and service to NFBG; to give full support to expanding library services in Georgia; to investigate the possibility of forming special-interest groups; to evaluate the programs and structure of NFBG; and, finally, to appeal

to George Henderson, NAC Board member from Georgia, for assistance to Georgia's blind, and to seek his resignation if he does not wish to cooperate.

The following officers were elected: president, Anderson Frazer, Columbus; first vice president, Judy Herndon, Macon; second vice president, Alfred Falligan, Savannah; secretary, Janet Clary, Augusta;

and treasurer, Anne Rogers, Newman. Ernest Robins, Savannah, and Max Parker, Doe Run, were elected to the board of directors for two-year terms, and Sandra Fuller, Albany, was elected for a one-year term. A motion was passed to hold our State conventions during the month of May. Delegates to the next NFB Convention will be elected at our May 1975 convention. □

NEW JERSEY CONVENTION

BY

FRAN CROSBY

The seventeenth annual convention of the New Jersey Council of the Blind, an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, opened with hospitality night on Friday, October 25, at the Beacon Manor Hotel, Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey, and extended to Sunday, October 27. This year some of the members and their friends and relatives were arriving as early as Thursday night to take advantage of the beautiful shore atmosphere. An added attraction was an early-bird drawing for a free convention weekend donated by the Blind Merchants of New Jersey.

Our NFB Representative, James Omvig, arrived on Friday evening and stayed with us right through our Sunday business meeting and adjournment.

Our thanks go to: the Ocean County Volunteers for the Blind for again brailleing our convention program; George Burck and the New Jersey Blind Men's Association, Inc., for our print programs and banquet tickets; and the Junior Women's Club of Point Pleasant Beach and Dolly and George Burck for handling registrations and banquet ticket sales. The Boy Scout troop

of Point Pleasant Beach did a really excellent job with our people this year.

Our Saturday morning program opened with an invocation by Reverend Robert R. Hooper, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Long Branch. Mayor Joseph F. Flynn welcomed us to Point Pleasant Beach and presented a very inspiring talk regarding the needed participation of blind people in their local, state, and national governments to some 125 people present in the main ballroom.

President Myles Crosby called upon a representative of each of the thirteen chapters present for a report of their year's activities.

In his annual report, president Crosby told of the many projects in which the organization is involved and the many meetings he had attended throughout the State in the interests of the blind.

The president then introduced Mr. Omvig, who brought us greetings and best wishes from the National Federation of the Blind.

This year we had exhibits from the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; the Hadley School for the Blind, Illinois; Visualtek; and the Craft Bus from the New Jersey Commission for the Blind, displaying and selling articles made by the blind as well as an NFB jewelry sales table.

The afternoon session opened with a very interesting talk by Mary A. Hunsicker, acting head of the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Ms. Hunsicker really seems dedicated to the interests of the blind. It was the consensus of the Council's members that we make every effort to have her appointed head of the New Jersey Library.

Following an enlightening talk by Jim Omvig, outlining the past year's activities of the National Federation of the Blind, we had a panel on "Employment of the Blind," which he moderated. Taking part in this panel discussion were George Young, Social Security service representative; Gregory Adams, college student and part-time radio employee; Milford Force, vending stand operator; and Howard Roszel, computer programmer. These members of the panel must have done a bang-up job, as there were very few questions fielded making for a very short question and answer period.

Jan Force, this year's door prize chairman, was kept very busy throughout our convention and banquet.

The banquet in the evening convened with our good friend, Reverend John E. Manola, Curate of Trinity Episcopal Church, Red Bank, giving the invocation. This is the tenth time we were fortunate enough to have Reverend Manola with us

for an invocation. Milford Force, toastmaster, presented our NFB representative and keynote speaker for the evening, James Omvig, who, under very difficult conditions, did an impressive job with his banquet talk, delivered to the 154 persons present.

Our Sunday morning business meeting opened with a very large assembly present. The following officers were elected for 1974-1975: president, Myles Crosby, Leonardo; first vice president, Martin Friedman, Lyndhurst; second vice president, Herbert Falkenstern, Norwood; secretary, Mildred Tremple, Trenton; treasurer, L. Paul Lahaye, Freehold. President Myles Crosby then appointed as the three additional executive committee members Mary Rondinara, Neshanic; Pauline Santora, Jersey City; and Eugene Kirkland, Newark. Among the morning's business activities was the adoption of the resolutions, the decision to review and revise the Council's constitution, and to appoint a committee to investigate the establishment of a fund in memory of our late and dedicated member, Mike Sofka. The purpose of this fund is "to grant an award to the Outstanding Chapter of the Year."

This year the Ladies Auxiliary of the New Jersey Blind Men's Association, Inc., enriched our council treasury with a donation of \$140.75 presented by their president, Dolly Burck.

President Crosby again presented Jim Omvig who delivered some inspiring parting words. At this time president Crosby reminded us that much had to be done to further our interests in the future and he called upon all chapters to assist in this work on a local level if we are to progress and not regress. □

OHIO CONVENTION

BY

JOHN KNALL

The twenty-eighth annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio was held on October 18, 19, and 20 at the Hollenden House Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio, with an executive board meeting on the afternoon and evening of the 17th.

We received quite a bit of TV coverage. Thursday, Channel 3 took pictures of the hotel and the brailled elevators. On Friday afternoon they interviewed James Gashel, our Washington Chief and our president, Robert Eschbach. On Saturday afternoon, Channels 5 and 8 were at our convention. Many of the Cleveland radio stations gave us spot announcements.

The attendance at the convention, we estimate, was around 250 persons, and we had 194 at our banquet. Twenty-three affiliates answered the roll call. The Telephone Pioneers were with us to assist us in many ways.

The convention was called to order by the president, Robert Eschbach, at 1:15 on Friday afternoon. After the usual opening ceremonies, the first speaker was Mary Ellen Reihing, secretary of the NFB Student Division, and president of the student chapter of the NFB-O. She is a graduate of Bowling Green University and is going on to graduate school. She spoke to us on the theme of the convention, "The Federation Way."

We heard reports from our president, treasurer Ivan Garwood, and secretary John Knall, who reported on the motions which were adopted by the executive board on

Thursday. We again heard from our president, but this time in the roll of a delegate to the NFB Convention in Chicago. He stated that it was one of the best conventions that he had attended. Many of us Ohioans who had also attended agreed with him.

The Friday evening session began with committee reports: the awards committee, Shirley Stowe; and the constitution committee, Colleen Spain. The latter committee submitted five amendments, one of which changed the terms of the officers from one year to two years. Another committee to report was the finance, sustain membership, chaired by Edna Fillinger.

James Gashel, Chief of our Washington Office was introduced. He told us that the Randolph-Sheppard Amendments had passed on Wednesday, October 16. We were the first affiliate to know this. He described the bill in detail. All it needs now to make it law is the President's signature. It may be necessary to write to the President and urge him to sign the Vocational Rehabilitation bill. He also told us that we have a very good chance of passing our Disability for the Blind bill, that is if you write letters, letters, letters. Following his presentation, he fielded many questions on a whole range of subjects. It was announced that typists were available for anyone who would like to write to their Congressmen about our disability bill.

We heard from the Human Relations Committee, under the chairmanship of Ray

Creech. Ray was also appointed chairman of a select committee to prepare materials and visit Senator Metzenbaum's office and also the four local Congressmen and talk to them about our Disability for the Blind bill.

The legislative committee, under the chairmanship of Tom Matthews, reported that we had to recall our little Randolph-Sheppard bill because so many amendments, which were detrimental, were added to it. It will be introduced again next year.

Saturday morning the vendors chapter and the students chapter met; there was a meeting of alumni of the Ohio State School for the Blind; and the public relations committee, Stanley Doran, chairman, held a meeting.

The first order of business at the Saturday afternoon session was the report of the ways and means committee, J. Dewey Cummings, chairman, who told us that our "pocket pals," pocket diary calendars, were available at the convention for distribution. Each affiliate took its share home. The president reported to us on the membership recruitment drive.

The first of two speakers for the afternoon was Richard Oestreich, director of the Ohio Rehabilitation Commission, who spoke to us and answered many questions. Many of us had the feeling that we have started a dialogue between the director of the commission and the NFB of Ohio. He was told that if he recognized the NFB of Ohio as the representative of the organized blind of Ohio and works with us, he will have no greater friend than the NFB of Ohio; we will be at the legislature on his behalf, on our behalf, and on the behalf of

the Bureau of Services for the Blind. But to the extent this does not happen, he may have no greater enemy than the organized blind of Ohio. His response was, "How can I refuse such an offer?"

The other speaker was Dr. Howard Siegel, one of the leading ophthalmologists in the Cleveland area, who spoke on "New Developments in Eye Treatment and Surgery." He told it as it is; he gave us no great hopes and said that research is extremely slow, that very little progress is being made, and that we should be very wary of these spectacular articles in the news media telling of some new breakthrough in eye treatment or surgery. He advised us very strongly to consult reputable ophthalmologists to see what our chances really are. He said in most cases these new developments have a one or two percent chance of success. The remaining patients go through a lot of discomfort and a lot of expense for nothing. Dr. Siegel graciously answered many questions.

The highlight of our convention is usually our annual banquet. This year was no exception. Of course, James Gashel was our featured speaker. The speech was not only educational but inspiring. The master of ceremonies was Wayne Mack, very well-known radio announcer in the Cleveland area. One of the features of the banquet program is the awards. This year we had two "Alfonso Smith Federationist" awards. These are given to blind persons within the organization who have done the most to further the goals of the NFB of Ohio. They went to our president, Robert Eschbach, and the secretary, John Knall. Another award was given to Don Stewart, feature writer for the Dayton *Daily News*, who wrote five articles which exposed the lack of services provided by the Dayton

office of the Bureau of Services for the Blind.

The first order of business at the last session was the election of officers. The following three officers were re-elected by acclamation: president, Robert Eschbach; secretary, John Knall; and treasurer, Ivan Garwood. Mary Ellen Reihing was elected first vice president; Stanley Doran, second vice president. Thomas Matthews and

Mildred Harrison were elected for two-year terms on the executive committee.

Next we proceeded to some of the unfinished business of the convention. Stanley Doran gave the public relations committee report. Brother John Soehnel, the liaison between the OAWB and the NFB of Ohio, reported on his activities. The officers were installed by Rev. Myers Bost. □

TEXAS CONVENTION

BY

PEGGY MELTON

The 1974 NFB of Texas convention was held in Houston at the Texas State Hotel on October 4, 5, and 6. This year set a record for attendance at a convention of the NFB of Texas. This year's convention was large in both number and in enthusiasm. The reception in the presidential suite Friday evening was most successful.

The convention was called to order Saturday at 9 a.m. by Mr. Louie Vinson. The invocation was by the Reverend Billy Grimes of Houston. Dr. Randel of the city health department made the speech of welcome in the mayor's absence. State president Dick Roberts was introduced and business was under way.

Mr. Hartsel Gray, Harris County treasurer, spoke with much conviction concerning the following facts: Employment opportunities have not increased for the blind in Texas; employment for blind persons is at a standstill and is dangerously close to regression; all the urging to "hire the handicapped" has done little for the blind;

offices in county and city governments fail to hire the blind when possible; a capable blind person is often not given a chance for employment. Mr. Gray pointed out that blind people in Texas should make themselves heard in their own behalf. Mr. Gray and Dr. Randel pledged to work with the organized blind for the purpose of finding employment for capable blind in government offices.

During the question and answer period it was learned that blind voters in Harris County are not permitted persons of their choice to assist them in voting but must use a precinct official. Mr. Gray agreed to present a letter from NFB of Texas, along with a copy of regulations dealing with voting procedures for blind citizens. Mr. Gray assured us that this situation could and would be corrected.

Mr. Robert Norris, field representative for Social Security and SSI, read and explained the eligibility requirements for the blind. He felt the SSI program was doing a good service with very few problems. The question and answer session

which followed, however, left no doubt that there are problems about which something needs to be done.

Mr. Bud Davidson of the State Commission for the Blind was welcomed as a new member of the NFB. He recently joined the San Antonio chapter. Mr. Davidson spoke on the history and progress of the State Commission for the Blind. A very informative question and answer period followed in which much emphasis was placed on consumer input. Mr. Davidson seemed very interested and receptive to suggestions on this subject from the group.

The members of NFB of Texas were happy to have Mr. James Gashel as a guest at the convention. He brought greetings from the National Office and contributed much to the success of the convention.

Mr. Gashel spoke to the meeting Saturday on a number of important issues, including legislation affecting the blind and what can be done to assure its success. He recommended a letter-writing campaign; gave a report on NAC; and urged Federationists to help finance the National Office.

Everyone was in a festive mood at the banquet Saturday evening. Charters of affiliation were presented to the recently organized Amarillo and San Angelo chapters. San Antonio received a charter of affiliation for the name change of the Alamo chapter to NFB of Texas, San Antonio chapter. Mr. Gashel was the banquet speaker.

The Sunday session was a business meeting, and reports were read and approved. A collection was taken for the

National Office from the floor of the convention. Contributions and pledges were taken for the Bowie Taylor Memorial Fund.

A number of resolutions were adopted concerning changes in the policies of the State Commission for the Blind and the business enterprises program. A resolution was adopted dealing with charges for directory assistance by Southwestern Bell. A resolution to be presented to the State Board of Insurance dealing with insurance discrimination against the blind was adopted.

The election of State officers was as follows: president, Dick Roberts, Houston; first vice president, Louie Vinson, Houston; second vice president, Walter Musler, San Antonio; treasurer, Don Welch, Dallas; secretary, Peggy Melton, Pasadena; board members, Albert Wilson, San Antonio, and Peggy Lane, Amarillo. Effie Neal of San Angelo was elected to fill the remaining one-year term for board member which was vacated by Don Welch when he was elected treasurer. Lydia West of Fort Worth is the other board member having one year to serve.

The business meeting closed with the presidential report by Dick Roberts in which he reminded Federationists of the successes of the past year. He urged each Federationist to become more active in the coming year. Organization of new chapters is most urgently needed in Texas. The convention adjourned with high resolve for more real effort and accomplishment in the year to come. □

WASHINGTON CONVENTION

BY

MARIA BRADFORD and CARL JARVIS

Friday morning, October 11, the largest convention of blind people in the history of the State of Washington was called to order by Sue Ammeter, president of the host affiliate, University Association. During the next three days, the 152 persons registering at the Roosevelt Hotel in Seattle, would participate in building an atmosphere of solidarity and strength never before seen in this State's organized blind movement. A good board meeting the previous night had set the tone of the convention. Officers and chairmen presented reports bursting with activities and filled with solid achievement.

Father Peter Daley of the Missions Guild for the Blind gave the opening invocation, and Federationists were officially welcomed to Seattle by Gary Bloomquist, from the mayor's office, who spoke of some of the blind people hired by the city. He reminded us of the mayor's determination to guarantee equal opportunity to the blind.

In the president's report, Carl Jarvis summarized the past year's activities. He noted that we have really become a part of the national movement as well as showing strong growth at State and local levels. President Jarvis pointed out that this year we had our largest delegation ever to attend the National Convention.

At the State level, we added a new affiliate, the NFB of South Sound, in Olympia. This chapter joined NFB of Cowlitz County as the second chapter to use our national name in the local name.

Three other chapters changed their names during the year to include NFB. They are: NFB of Seattle, formerly King County Association; NFB of Yakima County, formerly Yakima County Association; and NFB of Spokane, formerly Inland Empire Action Federation.

President Jarvis said that work has continued on gaining support and passage of our commission for the blind bill, and the jury duty bill was now supported by Governor Dan Evans. He said also that many of our chapters were doing a fine job in gaining support from their legislators and Congressmen. Our greatest strength and strongest growth, he maintained, was in attacking discrimination whenever it occurs. As an example, Jarvis referred to the Regional Library for the Blind, which, for the first time and solely through our efforts, now employs a blind person. In closing, president Jarvis spoke of the recent Operations Review of Services for the Blind, carried out by the Department of Social and Health Services. The review revealed many of the very problems and inadequacies within State Services for the Blind that NFBW has pointed to for the past several years. In view of this, as well as the recent resignation of Dr. Jerome Dunham, supervisor of State Services for the Blind, president Jarvis called for a redoubling of our efforts to establish a commission for the blind and bring responsible and responsive programs to the blind of our State.

Mr. Dean Spenser, coordinator for the program for the visually impaired at Seattle

Community College, spoke about the special class, now in its second year at the college's central campus. Mr. Spenser said that he was able, through this program, to prepare visually handicapped students for adult life by using innovative testing procedures in every possible medium for learning skills such as note-taking, reading, mastery of math, and independence.

In the discussion which followed, Federationists voiced their concern that the program produced segregation of the blind and tended to "do for" the student in areas where he should do for himself. Ed Foscue pointed out that those students housed in the dorm are kept together and are isolated from other students. Manuel Urena, representing our National Office, said that such programs in California and other states have created ghetto schools for the disabled.

Later, a resolution was read and passed by the convention which states in part that the program at Seattle Community College has begun to exhibit the traits and characteristics of programs in other states, which contribute substantially to the dependence of students by arrogating to themselves functions formerly carried on by the students. This not only creates a poor image of blind students' abilities at college level, but contributes to the idea that special arrangements must be provided for all blind students. It has been shown that participation in these programs becomes compulsory, preventing college students from gaining maturity through the experience of carrying out these functions. It was resolved that NFBW strenuously oppose the expansion and continuation of the program at Seattle Community College until there is active participation and consultation by the organized blind at the

policy-making level. Further, it was resolved that segregation in all areas of campus life be eliminated.

Tom Gohm, member of our South Sound chapter and an employee of the State Department of Personnel, gave a presentation on changes within that department. He said there is a new ruling making it possible for a director of an agency to receive, in addition to the top three names from the register, the top three names of those whose applications show they have a specific disability.

Saturday morning, acting supervisor of State Services for the Blind, Frank Hoppes, reported on the agency's activities during the past year. After introducing four staff members, Mr. Hoppes said that there was some question as to the further operation of State Services for the blind as it has been administered. He hoped that the agency could remain intact if it were to be placed under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Dr. Roy Brothers, new superintendent of the Washington State School for the Blind, spoke about the special needs of the children being educated in the facility. He said that all of the one hundred staff members participate in the educational process. There is a cooperative effort with the Vancouver public schools to integrate the students both in the elementary and secondary levels. Work experience is offered to seniors in various community-based jobs.

Ms. Christy Cooms, from the State Library, talked about the different kinds of service offered by the public libraries, such as cassette recordings and spoken word recordings. There is a possibility that more

libraries will place Braille and talking books in their facilities for the use of the blind. She also reported that the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is planning to begin using automated cataloguing procedures and would also go to a regional storage center for little-used or special books and other materials. The western center will be in Utah.

With so much uncertainty and so many unanswered questions about the future of services for the blind in the State of Washington, the convention waited eagerly for the next speaker, Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services Charles Morris. He could not only provide answers but could, to a large degree, determine the structure of services to the blind. At the last minute, an emergency prevented Mr. Morris from attending. He sent in his place Mr. Barry VanLare, director of the Division of Community Services. Mr. VanLare presented the opinions and positions of the department in a straightforward manner.

He said that the memo ordering the vocational rehabilitation portion of services for the blind to be separated from the other services for the blind and placed under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was not intended to fragment services, but was meant to comply with Federal regulations. This decision had been held up, however, and it appeared that there were several alternative methods of relocating services for the blind within State government. Mr. VanLare said that the Governor opposed the establishment of a commission for the blind. The department opposed the establishment of a division for the blind within the department. The remaining choices were to go ahead with the

fragmentation, or establish an office for the blind within either the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Community Services Division. He told the convention that the department and his division had an open-door policy, that there was a need for consumer input, and invited the organized blind to submit any comments or suggestions. Finally, he said that no decision concerning final placement of services for the blind would be made until the State Advisory Committee had been consulted.

Elaine Davenport told the convention about the radio talking book station in the Puget Sound area. There are now one thousand receivers in use, each adapted to pick up the side band of radio station KUOW-FM. The station has had rapid growth and now broadcasts six days a week, with over ninety-three hours on the air weekly.

The final report of the afternoon was given by Arnold Sadler, chairman of the Advisory Committee on State Programs for the Blind. He questioned the status of the committee in view of the fact that many programs and policies were being made without the input of the committee. In particular, he mentioned the recent decision to fragment State services for the blind. A meeting the following week with Charles Morris had been scheduled with a subcommittee to discuss the problem.

This meeting has been held, and Mr. Morris made appropriate apologies to the committee and said that any future plans or programs affecting the blind would have the advice of the committee before any final action. He also said that upon the advice from the committee, an office for the blind would be established within the

department under the Division of Community Services. All programs for the blind would be housed with this office. While NFBW still supports the establishment of a commission for the blind, the new office does appear to be an improvement over the former position of State services for the blind.

Saturday night's banquet was full of enthusiasm. Reverend Carl Nissen of the Magnolia Presbyterian Church gave the invocation. State representative Jeff Dothwaite urged the members to continue to appear before the legislature, and he promised his continuing support. New charters were presented, guests were introduced, and letters were read from several dignitaries expressing regrets at not being present.

Mr. Manuel Urena delivered the banquet address. It was a masterful work and caused those who were assembled to ponder the direction of work for the blind.

On Sunday elections were held. Officers for the coming year are: president, Sue Ammeter, Seattle; vice president, Ralph Solberg, Warden; secretary, Maria Bradford,

Yakima; treasurer, Gary Ernest, Olympia; legislation-education chairman, Ed Foscue Seattle; public relations chairman, Lew Hendrix, Spokane; ways and means chairman, Bob Seller, Olympia; welfare chairman, Gene Gibson, Longview; organization chairman, Carl Jarvis, Spokane.

The 1975 convention site was set for Tacoma, with Spokane being selected for 1976.

Final business of the convention was the installation of the new officers. Ken Hopkins of our national Executive Committee presented the officers to the convention and had officers and members pledge their support to each other.

A very special thanks is extended from NFBW to Manuel and Pat Urena and Ken and Mary Hopkins. Our convention could not have been as great as it was without the support and counsel they gave us. This was our greatest convention ever, for another reason, too. Never have we had so many active and involved people in the organized blind movement in our State. □

MONITOR MINIATURES

At a time of rising unemployment, California Industries for the Blind finds itself in a unique situation—they urgently need blind and legally blind men and women in their sewing department. The private, non-profit organization is seeking full-time workers in their three manufacturing plants in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Emeryville to fulfill large government contracts for the manufacture of duffle bags, rifle covers, field first-aid kits, and canteen covers. They are anxious to interview skilled and semi-skilled workers in the sewing field and can assure them of forty hours per week employment as wages competitive to those paid in sighted industry. CIB maintains a union shop with full benefits for its three hundred employees. Readers are asked to inform their blind friends and neighbors of this excellent work opportunity. Interested parties should write to California Industries for the Blind, 840 Santee Street, Los Angeles, California 90014.

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Despite his own blindness, or perhaps because of it, Leonard A. Robinson has written a book describing the events leading up to passage of the Randolph-Sheppard Act, which is a story of how the act worked and still works today. The fact that more than 3,600 blind persons are currently employed in the operation of vending stands and machines in the Federal-state program is indisputable testimony to the success of the original idea. The book is entitled *Light At The Tunnel End* and can be purchased from the Foundation for the Handicapped and

Elderly, 1209 Burton Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

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Twenty-six Federationists, all members of Lions Clubs in their respective states, were on hand when the Lions Club Division of the NFB was founded in Chicago last July. The purpose of the new division is three-fold: to implement a program in the Lions Club in finding persons who have just gone blind (especially those of middle age and older) to inform them of the rehabilitation which is available; to pass out NFB literature and give talks at Lions Clubs and other community group meetings about blindness and related subjects; and to meet and talk about the projects in each of the respective Lions Clubs to which we belong. Those Federationists who are members of Lions Clubs and wish to join this new division may send their name, address, the Lions district number, and projects in which their club is involved to Julian Para, chairman, NFB Lions Club Division, 1638 West 44th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609.

* * * * *

An interesting thing happened to Tom Long of Sacramento, California, recently. On his way to the Federal Building, Tom was asked if a stranger could be of any help to him. Tom thanked the man but said he was just going down to the Federal Building and was okay. The man walked with Tom and talked all the way. Once inside the courtroom where Tom had been summoned for jury duty, he was surprised to learn that the stranger he had met on the

street was the Federal judge himself. The judge asked the usual questions of all the prospective jurors, including any grounds for asking to be excused, any reason why they would not be impartial in weighing the evidence, any conflict of interest, and so on. When the two attorneys got down to questioning Tom as an individual, the attorney for the plaintiff said Tom seemed to have a visual problem and that his case involved a lot of charts. Tom is totally blind. Tom explained how he would handle that, and the judge agreed with him, saying he had met Tom on the street and was convinced that there would be no problem. Then the plaintiff's attorney used one of his preemptory challenges and dismissed Tom. It was heartening to know, however, that the Federal judge was perfectly agreeable to having Tom serve as a juror.

* * * * *

The President recently signed Public Law 93-351, the major provisions of which include the following: a three-year extension of the Nutrition for the Elderly program at a \$600 million funding level; a \$35 million authorization for the State Area Program on the Aging to provide supportive transportation in connection with nutrition projects; the commissioner on aging would be prohibited from delegating his authority to persons not directly responsible to him; and a change in the cost-sharing schedule by local contributions for the Retired Service Volunteer Program to not more than ten percent for the first year, twenty percent for the second year, thirty percent for the third year, forty percent for the fourth year, and fifty percent for all subsequent years.

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Dr. Peter J. Salmon was named 1974 recipient of the Hadley School's Richard Kinney Challenge of Living Award at a professional session of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind in Brazil. Dr. Salmon, retiring chairman of the council's Committee on Services to the Deaf-Blind, has long been recognized in both the United States and abroad as a prominent pioneer in initiating service programs for deaf-blind youths and adults.

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The *Palmetto Auroran*, publication of the Aurora Club of South Carolina, announces yet another chapter in its coverage of the State—this one the tenth, the Greenwood Aurora Club of the Blind. Mr. G. M. Moore, a prominent Greenwood businessman, was unanimously elected president of the new chapter.

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Agencies for the blind are forever telling the gullible public that "eighty-five percent of what we learn comes to us through our eyes." But when challenged, they can never come up with the source of that statistic or any proof of its validity. This quote appeared in a TV quiz show named *Jeopardy* as part of the "Final Jeopardy Answer" for July 31, 1974. *Jeopardy's* source of information, the *New International Encyclopedia* by Grolier, reports that this alleged fact was first uttered by Thomas Edison in 1923. At the time, Mr. Edison was trying to convince schools that his new movie technique could be a very useful visual aid to education. So the agencies' grand statistic turns out to be nothing but a piece of advertising propaganda. □

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